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FA M O U S B E A U T I E S

AND

HISTORIC WOMEN.

A GALLERY OF CROQUIS BIOGRAPHIQUES.

BY

W. H. DAVENPORT ADAMS,

AUTHOR OF "SCENES FROM THE DRAMA OF EUROPEAN HISTORY;"
"DWELLERS ON THE THRESHOLD;" "MEMORABLE BATTLES IN
ENGLISH HISTORY," &c., &c.

"I was a sketcher then;
See here my doing."—TENNYSON.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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## P R E F A C E.

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How she is faire, how she is wise,  
How she is womanlike of chere.

GOWER, CONF. AMANTIS, IV. FOL 66.

In offering the following pages to the public, it is needful I should premise that they contain no elaborate biographies, no philosophical disquisitions, but simply, light gossiping, anecdotal sketches of the careers of certain Remarkable Women who occupy important niches in social history. If among these notices some are devoted to those bold and brilliant Beauties whose smiles once fascinated Kings, the reader will observe that, for the

sake of variety, and in further illustration of female influence upon society and literature, I have introduced several portraits of women of purer morals and loftier pretensions.

Upon those best known to the English reader, I have touched briefly and lightly; with respect to others—the Beauties of France, for instance—I have collected some details which will, I think, be less familiar to him, and have therefore indulged in a greater prolixity of statement. And as glancing at the side-scenes of history, as affording glimpses of the interior life of courts, as pointing a moral by their indications of the falseness and bitterness of gilded vice—I trust these volumes will be found both interesting and suggestive.

*Au reste*, I have indicated the principal sources from whence my materials have been gathered; have carefully avoided the intrusion of any anecdote justly calculated to offend the most fastidious reader; and aimed throughout at painting my portraits by a few bold and ready touches, rather than by a delicate and polished manipulation. The Gallery is now open for the admission of the public. May the sketches it contains be indulgently con-

sidered and favourably received ! And may my patrons forget the unskilfulness of the artist in the variety and interest of the subjects portrayed upon his canvas.

W. H. D. A.

London, October 1864.



NELL GWYNNE.

A.D. 1650—1687.

VOL. I.

B





## NELL GWYNNE.

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“When he was dumpish, she would still be jocund,  
And chuck the royal chin of Charles the Second.”

SIR GEORGE ETHEREGE.

### I.

GOOD-NATURE covers a multitude of sins, and the good-nature and kind heart of Nell Gwynne obtained for her in her life-time, despite of her notorious vices, a popularity which has survived even to the present day. She is the best known and the best loved of the frail beauties who intrigued and revelled in the court of the second Charles ; who fluttered, butterfly-like, though the mock splendours of that dreary period of dissipation and debauchery, and whose charms have been perpetuated on the voluptuous canvas of Sir Peter Lely. It is astonishing how ready the world is to condone with vice, if it will but assume a merry

face and put forward a liberal hand ; and the joyous laugh of Nell Gwynne still rings pleasantly in our ears, even though it be the preface of a startling oath or ill-mannered exclamation.

Eleanor Gwyn, Gwynne, or Gwynn, was born about the year 1650. She seems to have been of Welsh extraction, but the place of her birth is uncertain, authorities respectively affirming it to have been Hereford, Oxford, and a cellar in the Coal-yard, Drury Lane. Her parents were of the poorest class, and her early life was spent in the lowest portions of the town,

“ Her first employment was, with open throat,  
To cry fresh herrings, even ten a groat.”—*Rochester*.

And in this capacity she rambled from tavern to tavern, always ready with a sharp repartee and a pleasant song ; for nature had not only endowed her with a charming face, but with a lively wit and a musical voice. Her next avocation seems to have been that of waiter in an inn, for the Dole Tearsheets of the period often occupied this position ; and Pepys tells us that Nelly and Beck Marshall (the daughter of Stephen Marshall, the great Presbyterian) falling out, on one occasion, the latter alluded to Nelly’s *liaison* with my Lord Buckhurst. Nelly retorted that she was at least contented

with a single attachment, though brought up in a low *cabaret*, while Madam Beck, "though a Presbyterian's praying daughter," observed no limits in her gaieties.

From the tavern the transition was easy to "a lower depth," and Nell became one of the unhappy class who live by sinning, and are the reproach and curse of an artificial civilization. In this most pitiable degradation, however, she could not have long remained, as her first appearance on the stage was made early in 1665. According to the scurrilous memoir of Nell Gwynne, attributed to Sir George Etherege, she was, when very young, the mistress of a wealthy London citizen. "Who," he says,

"Who that has seen her muddling in the street,  
Her face all pot-lid black, unshod her feet,  
And in a cloud of dust her fingers shaking,  
Would he have thought her fit for monarch's taking ?  
Even then she had her charms of brisk and witty."

She abandoned the civic Lothario to sell oranges in the playhouse-pits, and her lively graces having attracted the notice of the actors, she was forthwith promoted to the stage, for which her natural temperament peculiarly fitted her. As early as April 3rd, 1665, Pepys speaks of her as "pretty, witty Nell," and we may infer that her talents and beauty had

already secured her popularity. The morals did not mend, however, and her liberality with her favours knew no stint. Among others, Lacy and Hart, the actors, are said to have shared them, and it was not until she became the protégée of Lord Buckhurst,\* afterwards famous as Earl of Dorset for wit, breeding, and courage, that she led a more reputable life.

Nell was one of the company of the King's theatre, built by Killigrew,† in 1663, on the site of the old Cockpit, in Drury Lane. Hart, Goodman, Lacy, Mohun, and Mrs. Knipp were among its "stars," and Ben Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher, Dryden, Lee, Sir Robert Howard, and Brome among its "authors." Nineteen of Dryden's plays, and seven of Lee's were produced there. Every afternoon it gathered within its walls a brilliant assemblage of the wits and beauties of the court—an audience more critical and censorious, perhaps, than any that Drury Lane has ever since been favoured with. Gossiping Pepys has enabled us by the curious revelations of his Diary to obtain a vivid picture of both before and behind the footlights. Of cavaliers in ruffles and flowing locks, exchanging repartees with ladies in loose robes and loose curls, some in masks, the more impudent without them.

\* See Illustrations in Appendix.

† See Illustrations.

Of the king in his box conversing familiarly with his mistresses, who are meanwhile ogling some favoured gallant in the pit. Of the orange girls with their backs to the stage chattering loudly with audacious Sedley or jovial Buckhurst, or passing the billets-doux of the courtiers to their wanton lady-loves. Of Madam Betty, that "little roman nose black girl," who was "mighty pretty" in Mr. Pepys' eyes. Of Pepys himself, fat, bustling, cringing, naughty Mr. Pepys, his fine wife, and dear friend Knibb. In yonder box, the splendid Buckingham is pouring compliments into the ears of the proud Castlemaine, whose beauty makes quite a "sunshine in the shady place." Here sits the poet Dryden, "short and stout, with a roundish dimpled face and a sparkling eye," exchanging criticisms on Robert Howard's last play with the witty Earl of Rochester. James, Duke of York reclines yonder, making violent love to one of his Duchess's maids of honour, the Duchess, as is her wont, looking sublimely indignant at her husband's folly. There spreads a loud hum of conversation all over the house, which hardly ceases when the green curtain rises, and Nell Gwynne, piquant and roguish, bounds forward to the footlights, with a laugh and a sunny glance, and a hat whose brims are of portentous dimensions, larger than a coach-wheel, and speaks the prologue to Dryden's

“Conquest of Granada.” At the rival theatre, the Duke’s, one Nokes, a favourite actor, has appeared in a hat of unusual size, and the town, as easily caught by an absurdity in 1664, as in 1864, has rewarded him with its liberal applause. Dryden has annihilated him now, however. For Nelly is short of stature, and her immense hat dwarfs her to the proportion of a child. As she flaps the huge brim to and fro, her audience are fairly convulsed with laughter, Charles is delighted, and the very actors giggle, “a circumstance none had observed before.” Who will go to see Nokes in a large hat when he can see Madame Nell in a larger?

Charles is said to have been captivated by Nell when she played the part of Valeria in Dryden’s “Tyrannic Love.” The poet, we are told, introduced her in this character purposely to attract the King’s notice, as previously his partiality for the lively actress had provided her with popular and agreeable parts for the same purpose. The epilogue was written expressly to display her piquancies of manner. After dying in the tragedy, she suddenly springs up, as the guards approach to carry off her dead body, and saluting them with the forcible couplet,—

“ Hold, are you mad? you d— confounded dog!  
I am to rise, and speak the epilogue,”

advances to the footlights, and then addresses the audience in language more polite, but scarcely less emphatic :—

“ I come, kind gentlemen, strange news to tell ye ;  
I am the ghost of poor departed Nelly.  
Sweet ladies, be not frightened : I'll be civil,  
I'm what I was, a little harmless devil.  
For, after death, we sprites have just such natures  
We had, for all the world, when human creatures :  
And, therefore, I, that was an actress here,  
Play off my tricks in hell, a goblin there.  
Gallants, look to 't, you say there are no sprites ;  
But I'll come dance about your beds at nights.  
And, faith, you'll be in a sweet kind of taking,  
When I surprise you between sleep and waking.  
To tell you true, I walk, because I die  
Out of my calling in a tragedy.  
O, poet, d— dull poet, who could prove  
So senseless, to make Nelly die for love !  
Nay, what's yet worse, to kill me in the prime  
Of Easter-time, in tart and cheese-cake time !  
I'll fit the fops ; for I'll not one word say,  
To excuse his ghostly out-of-fashion play ;  
A play which, if you dare but twice sit out,  
You'll all be slandered, and be thought devout,  
But, farewell, gentlemen, make haste to me,  
I'm sure ere long to have your company.  
As for my epitaph when I am gone,  
I'll trust no poet, but will write my own ;  
Here Nelly lies, who, though she liv'd a slattern,  
Yet died a princess, acting in St. Cat'rine.”

Nell's merits as an actress were not of a high order, but in what is now-a-days called “ low comedy,” and “ farce,” she displayed much

lively humour, and a by no means ungraceful mirth. In archness of dialogue, sparkling song, and merry dance, she excelled her contemporaries, and she obtained the approval of the critics as well as the public in such characters as Florimel, in Dryden's "Maiden Queen," Cœlia, in Beaumont and Fletcher's "Humorous Lieutenant," and Jacinta, in Shadwell's "Astrologer." But with the usual weakness of actors, (Liston thought he could play Hamlet, and Macklin fancied himself great in Shylock) Nell oftentimes essayed the Tragedy Queen, and as often lamentably failed. Some notable glimpses of her style of acting, and of the condition of "The King's House" in her time, may be obtained through the glasses of Mr. Pepys, which we now propose to borrow :

"January 23, 1866-7. To the king's house, and there saw the 'Humorous Lieutenant' (Beaumont and Fletcher), a silly play, I think ; only the spirit in it that grows very tall, and then sinks again to nothing, having two heads breeding upon one, and then Knipp's singing did please us. Here in a box above we spied Mrs. Pierse ; and going out they called us, and so we staid for them ; and Knipp took us all in and brought us to Nelly, a most pretty woman, who acted the great part of Cœlia to-day, very fine, and did it pretty well. I kissed her, and so did my wife ; and a mighty

pretty soul she is. We also saw Mrs. Ball, which is my little Roman-nose black girl, that is mighty pretty ; she is usually called Betty.

“ March 2, 1666-7. After dinner with my wife to the king’s house, to see ‘The Maiden Queen,’ a new play of Dryden’s, mighty commended for the regularity of it, and the strain of wit ; and the truth is, there is a comical part, played by Nell, which is Florimell, that I never can hope to see the like done again by man or woman. The King and Duke of York were at the play. But so great a performance of a comic part was never, I believe, in the world before as Nell did this, both as a mad girl, then most and best of all when she comes in like a young gallant, and hath the motions and carriage of a spark the most that ever I saw any man have. It makes me, I confess, admire her.

“ March 25, 1666-7. To the king’s play-house, and by and by comes Mr. Lowther and his wife and mine, and into a box, forsooth, neither of them being dressed, which I was almost ashamed of. Sir William Pen and I in the pit, and here saw ‘The Maiden Queen’ again ; which, indeed, the more I see the worse I like, and is an excellent play, and so done by Nell, her merry part, as cannot be better done in nature.

“ August 22, 1667. With my Lord

Brouncker and his mistress to the King's play-house, and there saw 'The Indian Emperor ;' where I find Nell come again, which I am glad of ; but was most infinitely displeased with her being put to act the Emperor's daughter, which is a great and serious part, which she does most basely.

"October 5, 1667. To the king's house ; and there going in, met with Knipp, and she took us up into the tireing rooms ; and to the women's shift, where Nell was dressing herself, and was all unready, and is very pretty, prettier than I thought. And into the scene-room, and there sat down, and she gave us fruit ; and here I read the questions to Knipp, while she answered me through all her part of 'Flora's Figarys,' which was acted to-day. But, Lord ! to see how they were both painted, would make a man mad, and did make me loath them, and what base company of men comes amongst them, and how lewdly they talk ; and how poor the men are in clothes, and yet what a show they make on the stage by candle-light, is very observable. But to see how Nell cursed, for having so few people in the pit, was strange ; the other house carrying away all the people at the new play, and is said now-a-days to have generally most company, as being better players. By and by into the pit, and there saw the play, which is pretty good.

“ December 26, 1667. With my wife to the King’s playhouse, and there saw ‘The Surprisal,’ by Sir Robert Howard, brother of Ned ; which did not please me to-day, the actors not pleasing me ; and especially Nell’s acting of a serious part, which she spoils.

“ December 28, 1667. To the King’s house, and there saw ‘The Mad Couple,’ which is but an ordinary play ; but only Nell’s and Hart’s mad parts are most excellently done, but especially hers ; which makes it a miracle to me to think how ill she do any serious part, as, the other day, just like a fool or changeling ; and, in a mad part, do beyond all imitation almost. It pleased us mightily to see the natural affection of a poor woman, the mother of one of the children brought on the stage ; the child crying, she by force got upon the stage, and took up her child, and carried it away off the stage from Hart. Many fine faces here to-day.

“ January 11, 1667-8. To the King’s house, to see ‘The Wildgoose Chase.’\* In this play I met with nothing extraordinary at all, but very dull inventions and designs. Knipp came and sat by us, and her talk pleased me a little, she telling me how Miss Davies is for certain going away from the Duke’s house, the king being in love with her ; and a house is taken for her and

\* By Beaumont and Fletcher.

furnishing ; and she hath a ring given her already worth six hundred pounds ; that the king did send several times for Nelly, and she was with him, and I am sorry for it, and can hope for no good to the state from having a prince so devoted to his pleasure. She told me also of a play shortly coming upon the stage, of Sir Charles Sedley's, which, she thinks, will be called, 'The Wandering Ladies,'\* a comedy that she thinks will be most pleasant, and also another play called 'The Duke of Lorraine' (Lerma), besides 'Catiline,' which she thinks, for want of the clothes which the king promised them, will not be acted for a good while.

" February 20, 1667-8. Dined, and by one o'clock to the King's house ; a new play, 'The Duke of Lerma,' of Sir Robert Howard's, where the king and court was ; and Knipp and Nell spoke the prologue most excellently, especially Knipp, who spoke beyond any creature I ever heard. The play designed to reproach our king with his mistresses, that I was troubled for it, and expected it should be interrupted ; but it ended all well, which saved me.

" January 7, 1668-9. My wife and I to the King's playhouse, and there saw 'The Island Princess,'† the first time I ever saw it ; and it

\* This play is not included among Sedley's published works.

† By Beaumont and Fletcher.



is a pretty good play, many good things being in it, and a good scene of a town on fire. We sat in an upper box, and the merry jade, Nell, came in and sat in the next box, a bold slut, who lay laughing there upon people, and with a comrade of hers, of the Duke's house, that came to see the play."

Nell's connection with Lord Buckhurst began and ended in 1667. He withdrew her from the theatre in July, promising her an allowance of one hundred pounds per annum, and taking her to Epsom,\* they lodged with Sir Charles Sedley, and kept a "merry house." In the following month, the fickle peer deserted her. "Sir William Penn and I," says Pepys, "had a great deal of discourse with Mall, who tells us (August 26th) that Nell is already left by my Lord Buckhurst, and that he makes sport of her, and that she is very poor, and hath lost my Lady Castlemaine, who was her great friend; she is come to the playhouse, but is upheld by them all." Her spirits, however, were not affected by her ill-treatment; she soon regained her popularity and favour, and in 1668 became the mistress of the king, over whom she obtained an influence by her liveliness and good-nature, that endured to the very last, and wrung from his dying lips the pitiful ejaculation, "Do not let poor Nelly starve!"

\* See Illustrations in Appendix.

## II.

Madam Nell at this time lodged in Drury Lane, where Pepys saw her, one fine May-day morning, "standing at her lodging's door in her smock sleeves and boddice," looking at the May-day dance of the milkmaids with their garlanded pails. Drury Lane was then not only an aristocratic, but a pleasant neighbourhood, with green fields and blooming hedgerows around and about it, and the silver Thames rippling by the grassy bank and rich gardens of the Strand. At the corner, stood the large brick pile of Craven House, built some forty years before, by the heroic Lord Craven, the lover—perhaps the husband—of Elizabeth Stuart, Queen of Bohemia. Bow Street, not far off, was the fashionable promenade

"Of fops, and wits, and cits, and Bow Street beaux," and the poets and writers of the time loved to meet at the Rose, at the corner of Russell Street, where "glorious John" directed, and by his own eloquent utterances elevated and sublimed,

"The feast of reason and the flow of soul."

Her acquaintance with the king commenced in January, 1668. Sir George Etherege relates, that she was first introduced to him by

the Duke of Buckingham. Other authorities assert, that the king having been particularly pleased with her performance in the monster-hat, sent his coach for her when the play was ended, and took her home to sup with him. A third statement runs, that before her acquaintance with the king, she was kept by a brother of Lady Castlemaine, who for his own sake and his sister's, endeavoured to conceal her from the amorous Charles. One day, however, in spite of this caution, his majesty saw her, and the same night removed her. Her lover had carried her to the play at a time when he had not the least suspicion of his majesty's being there ; but as that monarch had an aversion to his robes of royalty, and was incumbered with the dignity of his state, he chose frequently to throw off the load of kingship, and consider himself as a private gentleman. Upon this occasion, he came to the play incog., and sat in the next box to Nelly and her lover. As soon as the play was finished, his majesty, with the Duke of York, the young nobleman, and Nell, retired to a tavern together, where they regaled themselves over a bottle ; and the king began to show such civilities to Nell, that she could not but understand the meaning of his gallantry. The tavern-keeper was entirely ignorant of the quality of the company ; and it was remarkable, that when the reckoning came to be paid, his majesty,

upon searching his pockets, found he had not money enough about him to discharge it, and asked the sum of his brother, who was in the same situation; upon which Nell observed, that she had got into the poorest company that she ever was in at a tavern. The reckoning was paid by the young nobleman, who that night lost both his money and mistress.

In her new position, Madame Ellen, as she was now called, soon won mightily upon her royal lover's favour, and was maintained at a vast expense. "The Duke of Buckingham told me," says Bishop Burnet, "that when she was first brought to the king, she asked only five hundred pounds a year, and the king refused it. But when he told me this, about four years after, he said she had got of the king above sixty thousand pounds." The yearly pension was placed at one thousand pounds. Abandoning Drury Lane, she at first took a house on the north side of Pall Mall, at the corner of St. James's Square, where now stands the Army and Navy Club, but soon removed to the south side, the back of her mansion (now No. 79) looking into the Park. A garden was attached to it, as we learn from a passage in Evelyn's *Memoirs*.

"March 1, 1675, I then walked with him through St. James's Park to the garden, when I both saw and heard a very familiar discourse

between the king and Mrs. Nellie, as they called an impudent comedian, she looking out of her garden on a terrace at the top of the wall, and the king standing on the green walk under it. I was heartily sorry at this scene."

Charles appointed her, in 1675, a lady of the Privy Chamber to Catherine of Braganza, and though she still remained one of the liveliest and most frolicsome of creatures, she proved herself in other respects not unworthy of the favour with which the king regarded her. She does not appear to have disgraced him, like his other mistresses, by shameful infidelities, and was always prompt to relieve the distressed, and share her wealth with those who had befriended her in her days of poverty. Dryden, Nat. Lee, Otway, Bushe, all were recipients of her generous bounty. On one occasion, when driving up Ludgate Hill in her carriage, she perceived some tipstaves hurrying a poor clergyman to prison. Ordering her coachman to stop, she inquired into the particulars of his misfortune, and some persons arriving who bore testimony to the excellence of his character, she not only paid the debt, but soon afterwards obtained for him a preferment.

At her instigation, or, at all events, through her constant encouragement, Charles erected Chelsea Hospital for the succour of disabled or wounded soldiers. An inn in its vicinity still

exhibits “Nell Gwynne’s Head” as a sign, and her memory was formerly drunk as a toast by the pensioners on the anniversary of their Royal founder’s birthday.

In her new and splendid state she retained not only the good qualities of her natural disposition, but some of the habits of her early breeding. “Anybody,” says the rival sultana, Louise de Querouailles, “might know she had been an orange girl by her swearing.” She swore freely, fully, and fervently. Etherege, in the coarse satire of “Madam Nelly’s complaint,” represents her as saying,

“ Before great Charles let quacks and seamen lie,  
He ne’er heard swearers till Moll Knight and I,  
Never heard oaths less valued, or less true ;  
And yet ’tis said he’s paid for swearing, too :  
Louder we swore than plundering dragoons,  
S’blood followed s’blood, and zounds succeeded zounds.”

Another of her vices was common enough in Charles’s licentious court, where high play occasionally gave his blasé gallants a new sensation. She was fond of the basset table, and on one occasion, lost no less than fourteen hundred guineas to the Duchess of Mazarin.

Between the English courtesan, light, merry, and honest, and the French mistress, the subtle but brilliant Duchess of Portsmouth, there existed a chronic rivalry ; but the Parisian could

never shake the influence which Nell had acquired over the king's mind and heart. Madame de Sévigné's description of this "woman's warfare" has been often quoted, but is too characteristic to be omitted here.

"Mademoiselle de K (Kerouailles, or Querouailles) has not been disappointed in anything she proposed. She desired to be mistress to the king, and she is so ; he lodges with her almost every night, in the face of all the court. She has had a son, who has been acknowledged, and presented with two Duchies ; she accumulates wealth, and makes herself feared and respected by as many as she can. But she did not foresee that she should find a young actress in her path, whom the king dotes on, and that she should be unable to draw him from her. He divides his attentions, his time, and his health between these two. The actress is as haughty as Mademoiselle ; she flouts her, grumes at her, ridicules her ; she frequently beguiles the king from her, and boasts whenever he shows her the preference. She is young, bold, indiscreet, and of a lively humour ; sings, dances, and plays her part with excellent skill. She has by the king a son, whom she trusts to get acknowledged. With respect to Mademoiselle, she reasons thus : 'This Duchess,' she says, 'professes to be a person of quality, says she is connected with

the best families of France, and whenever anybody of rank or distinction dies, attires herself in mourning ; now, if she be so high a lady, why disgrace herself to be a king's courtesan ? She ought to die with shame. But as for me, it is my profession, I pretend to nothing better. The king has a son by me. I declare that he ought to acknowledge him, and I know very well that he will do so, for he loves me as well as he loves the Duchess. This creature," concludes the lively letter-writer, " has the best of the strife, and annoys and discomfits Mademoiselle exceedingly."

In those days of fierce religious strife the French courtesan was necessarily identified with the Roman Catholic party, while Nell Gwynne became the Protestant heroine. She was passing through the streets of Oxford, on one occasion, when her carriage was mistaken for that of the Duchess of Portsmouth, and the mob hooted and groaned with true fanatical hate. Nell quickly put her head out of the carriage-window, and with a smile, exclaimed, " You are in error, good people, I am the Protestant mistress !"

She was undoubtedly a favourite with the people, notwithstanding Rochester's savage gibe,

" Look back and see the people mad with rage,  
To see the punk in such an equipage ;"

and there was much in her character and disposition to excite their sympathy. A curious illustrative anecdote is recorded in the venerable pages of excellent Sylvanus Urban. "She was the most popular of the King's mistresses," says the writer; "an eminent goldsmith, who died about fifteen years ago (*i.e.* 1737) in the seventy-ninth year of his age, assured me that when he was a prentice, his master made a most expensive service of plate (the King's present) for the Duchess of Portsmouth. He remembered well that an infinite number of people crowded to the shop out of mere curiosity; that they threw out a thousand ill-wishes against the Duchess, and wished the silver was melted, and poured down her throat; but said 'twas ten thousand pities his Majesty had not bestowed this bounty on Madame Ellen."

Mr. Jesse speaks of "an amusing pasquinade," entitled, "A Pleasant Battle between the Two Lapdogs of the Utopian Court," which very vividly exemplifies the hostile spirit in which Mademoiselle was regarded. Part of the argument runs,

"The English lap-dog here does just begin  
The vindication of his lady, Gwynn :  
The other, much more Frenchified, alas,  
Shows what his lady is, not what she was."

The two curs, Tutty (English) and Snap-

short (French) having discussed very freely the merits of their respective mistresses, are about to settle the dispute in a peculiarly canine manner, when the rival beauties enter, and take up their own quarrel.

“*Duchess of Portsmouth.* Pray, Madam, give my dog fair play, I protest you hinder him with your petticoats, he cannot fasten. Madam, fair play is fair play.

“*Madam Gwynn.* Truly, Madam, I thought I knew as well what belonged to dog-fighting as your ladyship; but since you pretend to instruct me in your French dog-play, pray, Madam, stand a little farther, as you respect your own flesh, for my little dog is mettle to the back, and smells a Popish Miss at a far greater distance; pray, Madam, take warning, for you stand on dangerous ground. Haloo, haloo, haloo, ha brave Tutty!

“*Duchess of Portsmouth.* Ha, brave Snap-short.

“*Madam Nell.* A guinea on Tutty, two to one on Tutty. Done, quoth Monsieur.

“*Duchess of Portsmouth.* Begar, begar, me have lost near tousand pound.”

“ Tutty, it seems, beat Snap-short, and the bell Tutty bears home in victory: farewell!”

Besides her house in Pall Mall, Madam Nellie had a mansion close to the Castle at

Windsor, which afterwards became the residence of the Princess Anne. She also dwelt occasionally in the King's Road, Chelsea, which well-known thoroughfare received its name, it is said, from the frequency of the royal visits to the famous beauty. Her residence is, or was lately, known as Sandford Manor House, and belonged to a gas company. She accompanied the Court in its various peregrinations, and her visit to Winchester was the occasion of some scandal, which displayed the King's character in its more favourable light. Bishop Ken, at that time a Winchester prebend, had a good prebendal house in the Cathedral Close, opposite to the Deanery where Charles lodged. When the "Harbinger," whose duty it was to provide the King's suite with lodgings in a Royal progress, came to Winchester, he marked Ken's house for the use of "Mistress Gwynne." But the good prebend had the unwonted courage to refuse her admittance, "declaring," says Hawkins, "that a woman of ill-repute, ought not to be endured in the house of a clergyman, especially the King's Chaplain." And as he continued firm in his refusal, a room was built for the rejected courtesan at the north end of the Deanery, which was ever afterwards known by the name of "Nell Gwynne," and has only been removed within the present century. It was supposed that Charles would be indignant

at the uncourtly behaviour of his chaplain, but none are better able to appreciate virtue than the vicious, and the king admired the boldness which both his conscience and his good sense told him was worthy of a Christian priest.

By the king, Nell became the mother of two sons, Charles Beauclerk, born in Lincoln's Inn Field on the 8th of May, 1670, created Baron of Heddington and Earl of Burford in 1676, and Duke of St. Albans in 1684. He was reputed to be "very like King Charles," and the swarthy royal complexion remains a distinction of his descendants. Nell's second son, James Beauclerk, who was born on Christmas Day, 1671, died in France in September, 1680.

Charles to the last respected the fidelity and delighted in the merry sun-shiny disposition of his mistress, who, on her part, never disgraced him by intriguing with his courtiers. Her mode of life, indeed, appears to have been forced upon her by the circumstances of her early training, rather than to have been adopted from any natural inclinations to vice; and to the waitress at an inn—the orange-girl in the pit of "The King's House," her connection with the king must have seemed a splendid promotion, and her faithfulness to his bed a career of comparative purity. Charles remembered

her in his dying moments. "Do not," he said to his brother, soon to be his successor, "do not let poor Nelly starve." She did not long survive him, but died at her house in Pall Mall in November 1687, or, according to other authorities, in 1691. Cibber says that "her repentance in her last hours appeared in all the contrite symptoms of a Christian sincerity." She was interred, with some pomp, in the parish church of St. Martin's in the Fields, Dr. Tenison, the vicar, afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury, preaching the funeral sermon. The encomiums in which he indulged were afterwards reported to Queen Mary by Lord Jersey with the view of weakening the prelate's influence. But Mary, with her wonted good sense, replied, "I have heard as much: this is a sign that the poor unfortunate woman died penitent; for, if I can read a man's heart through his books, had not she made a pious and christian end, the doctor would never have been induced to speak well of her." Thus, Nell, who had never injured any one while living, was saved from the ill fortune of inflicting hurt upon an estimable man by her death.

## III.

WE propose to conclude our sketch of Nell Gwynne's career with some anecdotes illustrative of her character and disposition. The sources whence they have been gathered, and the authorities to which we have been indebted in the preceding pages, are indicated below.\*

Nell Gwynne's pretensions to the fame of a beauty cannot be disputed by any one who has examined Lely's portraits, or the writings of her contemporaries. Lely painted her with a swan under her arm, perhaps to indicate her simplicity and good temper. She was short, piquant, with a rounded form, a neat ankle, arched eyebrows, lively eyes, and a winning smile. She was somewhat of a sloven in her dress—"a slattern," Dryden calls her, and Granger says, "she continued to hang on her clothes with her usual negligence when she

\* *Biographia Britannia*, Vol. VI.; *Gentleman's Magazine*, A.D. 1752; *Pennant's London*; *Pepys' Diary*, ed. Lord Braybrooke; *Dryden's Works*, ed. Scott; *Miscellaneous Works of Buckingham, Etherege, &c.*, ed. 1704; *Cibber's Apology*, 8vo.; *Lettres de Madame de Sévigné*, ed. Paris, *Lettre LXXXII*; *Burnet's History of His Own Time*, Vol. I.; *Mrs. Jameson's Beauties of the Court of Charles*; *Evelyn's Diary*, &c.

was the king's mistress, but whatever she did became her." Her loveliness, in fact, was of that order which looks best in déshabillé. Nell would have looked charming even in curl papers! But in Charles's court, to use Horace Walpole's felicitous expression, all the ladies fastened up their habits with a single pin. And under the auspices of king and courtiers, Literature and Art went about with shoes down at heel!

Madam Nell adopted a curious expedient to hint to the king the propriety of her son's elevation to the same high rank as his children by other mistresses. Charles was in her apartments one day, when she called her son to her side. "Come here, you little bastard!" The king was annoyed by the expression, and remonstrated with her for using it. "Indeed," said the sly beauty, "I am very sorry, but I have no other name to give him, poor boy!" A few days afterwards, the lad was created Earl of Burford and Baron Heddington.

She neither suffered herself nor others to disguise, under fair-sounding names, the real ignominy of her life. One day, when driving in her coach to Whitehall, a wordy war broke out between her coachman and another who was driving a lady of high rank. The latter, in the course of the dispute, plainly told his adversary that he himself drove a countess while

the other drove a lady who was neither more nor less than a woman of ill fame. Nell's coachman was so wroth at this reproach, that he jumped from his box, and inflicted on the free-spoken offender a sound beating. When his mistress was made acquainted with the cause of the strife, she coolly bade him "go to, and never to risk his carcase again, but *in defence of the truth.*"

At a *petit souper* given in her lodgings, when the king, the Duke of York, and two or three of the most distinguished favourites were present, John Bowman, the actor, was engaged to sing. Charles expressed himself highly pleased with the performance. "Then, sir," said Nell, "to show you don't speak like a courtier, I hope you will make the singer a handsome present." The king, finding he had no money about him, asked the Duke if he had any. James replied, "I believe, sir, not above a guinea or two." Whereupon Nelly turned, with a joyous laugh, to her other guests, and exclaimed, in pleasant mimicry of the king's tone and favourite oath,—"Odd's fish, what company am I got into!"

"Oh Nell," said the king to her, one day, "what shall I do to please the people of England? I am torn to pieces with their complaints." "If it please your Majesty," she answered, frankly, "there is but one way left."

"And what is that?" said Charles. "Dismiss your ladies, and mind your business."

On the whole then, Cibber's character of this famous beauty seems to be marked by a spirit of justice and impartiality. "If we consider her," he says, "in all the disadvantages of her rank and education, she does not appear to have had any criminal errors, more remarkable than her sex's frailty, to answer for; and if Bishop Burnet, in his latter end of 'Charles the Second's life' seems to reproach his memory with too kind a concern for her support, we may allow it becomes a bishop to have had no eyes or taste for the frivolous charms or playful badinage of a king's mistress. Yet, if the common fame of her may be believed, which, in my memory, was not doubted, she had less to be laid to her charge than any other of those ladies who were in the same state of preferment: she never meddled in matters of serious moment, or was the tool of working politicians; never broke into those amorous infidelities which others, in that grave author, are accused of; but was as visibly distinguished by her particular personal inclination to the king, as her rivals were by their titles and grandeur."

For these reasons Nell Gwynne is the only one of the beauties of the court of Charles II.

with whose memory and fame posterity has been willing to deal leniently.

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*Authorities* :—Pepys' Diary ; Evelyn's Memoirs ; Burnet's History of His Own Time, Vol. VI. ; Mrs. Jameson's Beauties of the Court of Charles II ; Cibber's Apology, 8vo. edition ; Lettres de Madame de Sévigné, ed. Paris, Lettre lxxxxii ; Miscellaneous Works. of Buckingham, Etherege, &c., ed. 1704 ; Dryden's Works, ed. Scott ; Pennant's London ; Gentleman's Magazine, 1752 ; Cunningham's Story of Nell Gwynne ; Jesse's Court of England under the Stuarts, &c.



B A R B A R A   V I L L I E R S,

D U C H E S S   O F   C L E V E L A N D.

A.D. 1640—1709.

V O L. I.

D

1

## B A R B A R A   V I L L I E R S,

DUCHESS OF CLEVELAND.

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“Serene with argent-lidded eyes  
Amorous, and lashes like to rays  
Of darkness, and a brow of pearl  
Tressed with redolent ebony,  
In many a dark delicious curl,  
Flowing beneath her rose-hued zone.”

TENNYSON.

A SPLENDID and voluptuous beauty was this favourite mistress of King Charles, whose broad, white brow, black eyebrows, scornful imperious lips, and firm, decided nose, as pourtrayed on the “animated canvas” of Lely, fairly enough indicate her character, and illustrate her career. A woman of strong passions; not to be controlled or turned aside; of an audacious and licentious will; of a froward temper, capable of occasional flashes of generosity, but commonly selfish through her very pride; of more than

ordinary talents, perhaps, but too contemptuous or indolent to make use of them ; fond of pomp, and state, and show ; capricious, violent, headstrong ; but, nevertheless, possessing that marvellous gift of fascination, which spell-binds a weak intellect into hopeless idolatry, and subdues a strong mind into unwilling subservience in spite of its struggles to be free. Through a long life, Barbara Villiers exercised a strange influence over all with whom she came in contact, her beauty and audacity having much the same power as genius, and her daring will being admirably seconded by her irresistible charms.

She was the only daughter of a brave and loyal cavalier, of William, second Viscount Grandison, who had died at Oxford, in 1643, at the age of thirty, of wounds received in the siege of Bristol ; and who has found a deathless memorial to the purity of his mind, and the chivalrousness of his valour in the pages of his historian Clarendon. He was interred in the beautiful sanctuary of Christ Church, and his daughter, after the Restoration, erected there a stately monument in his honour.

Barbara Villiers was three years old when her father died. Of her childhood and education, we know nothing, but that the latter was not adapted to correct the faults of her natural disposition, was shown by the facility with which,



in her teens, she listened to the love-vows of Lord Chesterfield. He was reported to be the father of Lady Sussex, her eldest child. "He had a very agreeable face," says De Grammont, "a fine head of hair, an indifferent shape, and a worse mien; he was not, however, deficient in wit; a long residence in Italy had made him ceremonious in his commerce with men, and jealous in his connection with women." De Grammont then refers to the scandal connected with his name. "He had been much hated by the king," he says, "because he had been much beloved by Lady Castlemaine: it was reported that he had been in her good graces prior to her marriage; and as neither of them denied it, it was the more generally believed."

In 1658, she wedded one Roger Palmer, a student of one of the Inns of Court, and heir to a large fortune. As there was nothing in his character to command respect, and nothing in his disposition to attract affection, we can only conclude that she married him in order to enjoy his wealth, or secure a father for her children whom she might venture to speak of. But joining the exiled monarch's court in the Low Countries, her charms attracted the admiration of the susceptible Charles, and the frail beauty willingly accepted his homage. She followed him to England on his restoration to the throne, and found that his accession to the substantial

state and power of a king, had not weakened her hold upon his affections. He withdrew from the festivities that celebrated his entrance into London, on the evening of the famous 29th of May, 1660—withdrew from “the ways strewn with flowers, the bells ringing, the streets hung with tapestry, and fountains running with wine”—to pass the hours in dalliance with the voluptuous, but beautiful woman who had enslaved him.

Their first child, Anne Fitzroy, or Anne Palmer, was born on the 29th of February, 1662. Her father ought to have been the beauty’s husband, but that no one believed; the beauty herself declared she was the king’s child, which Charles and many of his subjects believed; scandal asserted she was the Earl of Chesterfield’s, which the censorious believed. Recovering from her accouchement with renewed charms, her influence over the king greatly increased, and was augmented, rather than shaken, by the event which should have terminated it, his marriage to Catherine of Braganza, May, 22, 1662.

The news of his passion for the imperious beauty had reached Lisbon, and the queen’s mother had accordingly charged her, on her departure for England, never even to suffer the name of Mrs. Palmer to be mentioned in her hearing. Of this circumstance, Charles was probably ignorant, and when the list of her

household was drawn up, the name of his mistress was inserted as a lady of the bed-chamber, in which position he hoped to continue his intimacy with her, yet not to excite the queen's attention. But on the list being submitted to her majesty, she struck out with her pen the abhorred name, and upon the king attempting a remonstrance, declared she would sooner return to her family than endure so cruel an insult. Some time elapsed before Charles ventured upon a second trial, and meanwhile, he elevated his favourite to a suitable rank by conferring upon her husband the title of Earl of Castlemaine.

It was on a state occasion, and at Hampton Court, when the queen was holding a reception in her chamber, that Charles suddenly led the splendid beauty through the glittering throng, and regardless of Clarendon's look of sorrowful gravity, presented her to Catherine. To the astonishment of the silent lookers-on, she received her graciously, and permitted her to kiss her hand. She had not caught the name, her ear being still not used to the English accent ; but a Portuguese lady in her suite reminding her in a whisper of her hated rival, she turned pale—the tears rushed hotly to her eyes—the blood flowed from her nose, and she fainted. She was removed to another room, and the company retired ; and Charles had the

grace to be ashamed of his heartless and indecent action.

But in a contest between the queen and the mistress, every shrewd observer perceived that the latter would eventually win. Catherine, though sufficiently well-looking, was ill-fitted by personal charms or mental accomplishments to contend with the superb loveliness and brilliant sallies of her rival. Moreover, the king was induced to persevere in forcing her upon the queen by his womanish dread of ridicule ; his apprehensions lest the world should laugh at his subjection to his wife ; his dread of the angry scorn of his mistress ; his alarm at the disrespectful jests of the witty gallants of his court. Having, therefore, prepared the way by the tenderest attentions to the queen, he endeavoured to interest her feelings by pointing out the extent to which his honour was involved, and to soothe her jealousy by protesting that since his marriage his fidelity had been, and should continue, unimpeachable. But Catherine's woman's heart revolted against the cruel imposture, and before he had concluded his elaborate argument, she burst into a passion of tears—into a paroxysm of wounded pride and mortified affection, which nothing could control.

Urged by his mistress to persevere, and inflamed by his own temper, the king now summoned to his aid no less a personage than Lord



Chancellor Clarendon, and enjoined upon him the task of obtaining the Queen's consent to the arrangement he desired. Clarendon at first refused. He felt all the shamelessness and cruelty of the task, all the indecency of forcing a husband's mistress into the presence and chamber of his wife; and, moreover, he heartily hated the proud and haughty Castle-maine, whose adherents were his bitterest foes, and whom he had forbidden from his own house. He, therefore, besought the King to desist from "the hard-heartedness and cruelty of laying such a command upon the Queen, which flesh and blood could not comply with." Charles listened to his arguments with patience, but refused to be influenced by them. And Clarendon, whose greed of power was the signal vice of his character, afraid of hazarding his hold of the seals by further resistance, consented to undertake a negotiation which his reason condemned as unjust, and his heart abhorred as cruel.

For this purpose, he held three interviews with the unhappy Queen, but found her unable to be moved by his most elaborate eloquence. Her womanly nature quickly detected the sophistry of his best conceived arguments, and she fairly overpowered the grave Chancellor by her moving appeals to his humanity, his honour, his manhood, his sense of what was due to her

defencelessness and solitary position. She reminded him that her marriage with Charles was contrived by him, and that he had always affected to be her friend. She would bow, as became her, to the king's authority in all other matters, but in this, both as woman, queen, and Christian she must remain firm in her refusal.

Clarendon was unwilling to press the matter further ; but Charles—hot with passion, wroth at the Queen's firmness, and resolved to place his mistress in the convenient post designed for her—stimulated him to a renewed effort by a missive in which he railed like an angry woman and forgot the dignity of a king. It was thus he addressed the grave statesman to whose faithful labours he was so largely indebted.

“ Hampton Court, Thursday morning.

“ For the Chancellor,

“ I forgot when you were here last to desire you to give Broderick good council not to meddle any more with what concerns my Lady Castlemaine, and to let him have a care how he is the author of any scandalous reports ; for if I find him guilty of any such thing, I will make him repent it to the last moment of his life.

“ And now I am entered on this matter, I

think it very necessary to give you a little good council, lest you may think that by making a farther stir in the business you may divert me from my resolution, which all the world shall never do, and I wish I may be unhappy in this world, and in the world to come, if I fail in the least degree of what I resolved, which is of making my Lady Castlemaine of my wife's bed-chamber, and whosoever I find endeavouring to hinder this resolution of mine, except it be only to myself, I will be his enemy to the last moment of my life.

“ You know how much a friend I have been to you ; if you will oblige me eternally, make this business as easy to me as you can, of what opinion you are of ; for I am resolved to go through with this matter, let what will come of it, which again I solemnly swear before Almighty God ; wherefore, if you desire to have the continuance of my friendship, meddle no more with this business, except it be to beat down all false and scandalous reports, and to facilitate what I am sure my honour is so much concerned in ; and whomsoever I find to be my Lady Castlemaine's enemy in this matter, I do promise upon my word to be his enemy as long I live.

“ You may show this letter to my Lord-Lieutenant, and if you have both a mind to

oblige me, carry yourselves like friends to me in this matter.

“CHARLES R.”

Charles, however, trusted not alone to the interposition of his Chancellor. He began a new course of conduct towards his unhappy queen, oppressing her with scornful neglect, lodging the Countess openly in Whitehall, intruding her daily upon the royal presence, and laughing and jesting in a manner which his courtiers speedily adopted and improved upon. While a brilliant circle surrounded the English Phryne, and all the pomp and splendour of the court seemed to find in her a centre, the queen sate in silence and deserted, except by her small retinue of Portuguese ladies. A loving, tender woman, an impulsive foreigner, without true friends and sage advisers, she soon succumbed in this new and ungenerous warfare. Suddenly, and just at the moment that Charles's better feelings began to reproach him for the part he was playing, she admitted the mistress into her household, at once flinging aside all reserve and restraint, took every opportunity of conversing with her, and distinguishing her with the most flattering notice. The foolish gentlewoman hoped, by her submission, to secure at least a share in her husband's affections. But men despise the very servility which they



endeavour to command, and Charles secretly condemned the queen for that compliance with his wishes which he had so long been seeking to extort.

Lord Castlemaine at first endured his wife's elevation and his own disgrace with apparent indifference, but his earl's coronet throbbed hotly upon his blushing brows. Pepys gives a curious picture of the awkward rencontres that occasionally took place between them. "That," he says, in reference to one of his visits to court, "which pleased me best, was my Lord Castlemaine standing over against us upon a piece of Whitehall. But methought it was strange to see her lord and her upon the same place, walking up and down without taking notice of one another; only, at first entry, he put off his hat, and she made him a very civil salute, but afterwards took no notice one of another: but both of them now and then would take their child, which the nurse held in her arms, and dandle it."

This polite understanding was fated to be somewhat abruptly broken. And to be broken by a quarrel in reference to the last subject, it might have been supposed, which could have interested so vile a couple. The Earl, a bigoted Roman Catholic, had resolved that his wife's son should be baptised according to the ritual of his creed, but Lady Castlemaine

protesting that he was the King's son, determined he should be christened by a Protestant clergyman. Who could successfully withstand that bold bad woman? The infant was baptized with the usual rites of the Anglican church, Charles the Second, the Earl of Oxford, and Lady Suffolk officiating as sponsors. The Earl had endured the degradation of his name and the insult to his honour, but was unable to bear this affront to his religious principles. He retired to the continent, and his wife, collecting all the money and jewels she could lay her hands on, became a permanent tenant of apartments at Whitehall.

From the amusing pages of Mr. Secretary Pepys we may now obtain an insight into the doings of the beauty and her royal lover.

"January 1662-3, Mrs. Sarah tells us how the king sups at least four times every week with my Lady Castlemaine; and most often stays till the morning with her, and goes home through the garden all alone privately, and that so as the very sentries take notice of it and speak of it. She tells me, that about a month ago she quickened at my Lord Gerard's at dinner, and cried out that she was undone; and all the lords and men were fain to quit the room, and women called to help her.

"September 14, 1660. To Whitehall Chapel, where one Dr. Crofts made an indifferent



sermon, and after it an anthem, ill sung, which made the King laugh. Here I first did see the Princess Royal since she came into England. Here I also observed, how the Duke of York and Mrs. Palmer did talk to one another very wantonly through the hangings that part the king's closet and the closet where the ladies sit.

“ May 21, 1662. My wife and I to Lord's lodgings, where she and I staid talking in Whitehall garden. And in the Privy garden saw the finest smocks and rich petticoats of my Lady Castlemaine's, laced with rich lace at the bottom, that ever I saw ; and did me good to look at them. Sarah told me how the king dined at my Lady Castlemaine's, and supped, every day and night the last week ; and that the night that the bonfires were made for joy of the queen's arrival, the king was there ; but there was no fire at her door, though at all the rest of the doors almost in the street, which was much observed ; and that the king and she did send for a pair of scales and weighed one another ; and she being with child was said to be the heaviest. But she is now a most disconsolate creature, and comes not out of doors, since the king's going (to Portsmouth, to receive Catherine of Braganza.)

“ August 23, 1662. Walked to Whitehall, and through my lord's lodgings we got into

Whitehall garden, and so to the Bowling Green, and up to the top of the new Banqueting House there, over the Thames, which was a most pleasant place as any I could have got; and all the show consisted chiefly in the number of boats and barges; and two pageants, one of a king, and the other a queen, with her maydes of honour sitting at her feet very prettily; they tell me the queen is Sir Richard Ford's daughter. Anon come the king and queen in a barge under a canopy with one thousand barges and boats I know, for they could see no water for them, nor discern the king or queen. And so they landed at Whitehall bridge, and the great guns on the other side went off. But that which pleased me best was, that my Lady Castlemaine stood over against us upon a piece of Whitehall. . . . One thing more; there happened a scaffold below to fall, and feared much hurt, but there was none, but she of all the great ladies only run down among the common rabble to see what hurt was done, and did take care of a child that received some little hurt which methought was so noble. Anon, there come one there booted and spurred that she talked long with, and by and by, she being in her haire, she put on his hat, which was but an ordinary one to keep the wind off. But it became her mightily as everything else do.

“ February 1, 1662-3. This day Creed and



I walking in Whitehall did see the king coming privately from my Lady Castlemaine's; which is a poor thing for a Prince to do: and so I expressed my sense of it to Creed in terms which I should not have done, but that I believe he is trusty in that point.

“April 8, 1663. After dinner to the Hyde Park; at the park was the king, and in another coach my Lady Castlemaine, they greeting one another at every turn.

“April 25, 1663. I did hear that the queen is much grieved of late at the king's neglecting her, he having not once supped this quarter of a year, and almost every night with my Lady Castlemaine, who hath been with him this St. George's feast at Windsor, and come home with him last night; and which is more, they say is removed as to her bed from her own home to a chamber in Whitehall, next to the king's own.

“July, 22, 1663. In discourse of the ladies at court, Captain Ferrers tells me that my Lady Castlemaine is now as great again as ever she was; and that her going away was only a fit of her own upon some slighting words of the king, so that she called for her coach at a quarter of an hour's warning, and went to Richmond; and the king, the next morning, under pretence of going a hunting, went to see her and make friends, and never was a hunting at all. After

which, she came back to court, and commands the king as much as ever, and bath and doth what she will. No longer ago than last night, there was a private entertainment made for the king and queen at the Duke of Buckingham's, and she was not invited ; but being at my Lady Suffolk's, her aunt's, (where my Lady Jemima and Lord Sandwich dined) yesterday, she was heard to say, ' Well, much good may it do them, and for all that, I will be as merry as they ; ' and so she went home, and caused a great supper to be prepared. And after the king had been with the queen at Wallingford House, he came to my Lady Castlemaine's, and was there all night, and my Lord Sandwich with him. He tells me he believes that, as soon as the king can get a husband for Mrs. Stewart, however, my Lady Castlemaine's nose will be out of joint ; for that she comes to be in great esteem, and is more handsome than she.

" June 10, 1666. The queen, in ordinary talk before the ladies in her drawing-room, did say to my Lady Castlemaine, that she feared the king did take cold, by staying so late abroad at her house. She answered before them all, that he did not stay so late abroad with her, for he went betimes thence (though he do not before one, two, or three in the morning) but must stay somewhere else. The king then coming in and overhearing, did whisper in her



ear aside, and told her she was a bold, impudent woman, and bid her to begone out of the court, and not come again till he sent for her; which she did presently; and went to a lodging in the Pall Mall, and kept there two or three days, and then sent to the king to know whether she might send for her things away out of the house. The king sent to her, she must first come and view them; and so she came, and the king went to her, and all friends again. He tells me she did, in her anger, say she would be even with the king, and print his letters to her.

“July 29, 1667. I was surprised at seeing Lady Castlemaine at Whitehall, having but newly heard the stories of the king and her being parted for ever. So I took Mr. Povy, who was there, aside, and he told me all—how imperious this woman is, and hectors the king to whatever she will.” Mr. Pepys then refers to a lover’s quarrel between them, which ended in the usual fashion of such quarrels, he adds: “She went out of the house, and never came in again till the king went to Sir Daniel Harvey’s to pray her; and so she is come to-day, when one would think his mind would be full of some other cares, having but this morning broken up such a Parliament with so much discontent and so many wants upon him, and but yesterday heard such a sermon against adultery. But

it seems she hath told the king, that whoever did get it, he should own it. And the bottom of the quarrel is this: She has fallen in love with young Jermyn, who hath of late been with her oftener than the king, and is now going to marry my Lady Falmouth; the king is mad at her entertaining Jermyn, and she is mad at Jermyn's going to marry from her, so they are all mad; and thus the kingdom is governed!

“August 7, 1667. Though the king and my Lady Castlemaine are friends again, she is not at Whitehall, but at Sir Daniel Harvey's, whither the king goes to see her; and he says she made him ask her forgiveness upon his knees, and promise to offend her no more so; and that, indeed, she did threaten to bring all his bastards to his closet-door, and hath nearly hectored him out of his will.

“January 16, 1668-9. Povy tells me that my Lady Castlemaine is now in a higher command over the king than ever—not as a mistress, for she scorns him, but as a tyrant to command him.”

The king had reason enough to complain of her infidelities, which were so notorious as to awaken the indignation and disgust of the country. The bold, bad beauty lavished her favours openly and unblushingly upon men of every class, from a peer to a rope-dancer, and regarded as little the honour of



her royal lover as her own. Her most lasting, and, perhaps, her sincerest attachment, was to Henry Jermyn, whose fortune it was to secure at one time or another, the favour of the most brilliant beauties of Charles's Court, though neither recommended by a handsome countenance nor a graceful figure. "Jermyn," says De Grammont, "was brave, and certainly a gentleman, yet he had neither brilliant actions nor distinguished rank to set him off; and, as for his figure, he had nothing to boast of. He was diminutive in his person, his head large, and his legs small; his features were not disagreeable, but he was extremely affected in his carriage and behaviour. His wit consisted entirely in expressions learned by rote, which he occasionally employed either in raillery or love. This was the whole foundation of the merit of a man so formidable in his amours." But De Grammont's portrait is highly coloured by his envy, and Jermyn must assuredly have possessed some remarkable qualities to have won such uniform success. We suspect that the secret of it was his earnestness. Others made love; he loved. And if his amours were numerous, at least they were sincere while they lasted; nor did he, like Grammont, Rochester, or Etherege, ridicule the lady whose favours he was enjoying. The polished Frenchman and the English wit, sneered while they kissed the

hands of the women they professed to adore, and addressed them in a tone of gay and insolent persiflage, instead of in that language of devotion, which has always such a charm for a woman's ear.

Certainly he obtained a wonderful influence over the imperious Castlemaine, whose passion was so extravagant and so little disguised, as to excite the anger of the good-natured king. The contempt with which he was regarded, pierced through even his indifference; and he felt it the more, because Jermyn had already been his successful rival in the graces of other beauties. "Though the king's affections for Lady Castlemaine were now greatly diminished," says the biographer of De Grammont, "yet he did not think it consistent with his dignity, that a mistress, whom he had honoured with public distinction, and who still received a considerable support from him, should appear chained to the car of the most ridiculous conqueror that ever existed. His majesty had frequently expostulated with the countess upon this subject; but his expostulations were never attended to. It was in one of these differences, that he, advising her rather to bestow her favours upon Jacob Hall, the rope-dancer, who was able to return them, than lavish away her money upon Jermyn to no purpose, since it would be more honourable for her to pass for



the mistress of the first, than for the very humble servant of the other, she was not proof against his raillery. The impetuosity of her temper broke forth like lightning. She told him, ‘that it very ill became him to throw out such reproaches against one, who, of all the women in England, deserved them the least ; that he had never ceased quarrelling thus unjustly with her, ever since he had betrayed his own mean, low inclinations ; that to gratify such a depraved state as his, he wanted only such silly things as Stewart, Wells, and that pitiful strolling actress (Miss Davis), whom he had lately introduced into their society.’ Floods of tears, from rage, generally attended these storms ; after which, resuming the part of Medea, the scene closed with menaces of tearing her children in pieces, and setting his palace on fire.” What course could he pursue with such an outrageous fury, who, beautiful as she was, resembled Medea less than her dragons, when she was thus enraged ?

As Charles loved peace above all things, even above his dignity, he resolved to call in a mediator between himself and this violent Messalina, and the difficult task, by the consent of both, and, as it proved, to the satisfaction of both, was referred to the Count de Grammont. After much negotiation he drew up, he informs

us, the following articles of peace which were agreed to.

“That Lady Castlemaine should for ever abandon Jermyn; that as a proof of her sincerity, and the reality of his disgrace, she should consent to his being sent, for some time, into the country; that she should not rail any more against Miss Wells, nor storm any more against Miss Stewart, and this without restraint on the king’s behaviour towards her; that in consideration of these condescensions, his majesty should immediately give her the title of duchess with all the honours and privileges thereunto belonging, and an addition to her pension, in order to enable her to support the dignity.”

In accordance with the stipulations of this singular treaty she was created, on the 3rd of August, 1670, about a year after its conclusion, Duchess of Cleveland. Thus, a shameless courtesan was raised to the highest rank in the English peerage because a king could not brook her ill-temper, and was dishonoured by the facility with which she granted her favours to the most unworthy lovers.

Another of her minions was even more despicable in character than the dissolute Jermyn. This was Jacob Hall, a rope dancer, whose only recommendations were a handsome face and a stalwart frame. The Duchess bestowed a pension on him, and their peculiar intimacy



is satirized in many of the popular ballads and street songs of the day. Granger speaks of him as "a due composition of Hercules and Adonis," and intimates that he was admired by others than the Duchess of Cleveland.

Major Hart, who deserted the army for the stage after the "happy restoration" of Charles II, and acquired no small celebrity as a tragedian, was also enrolled among the Duchess's lovers. She took no pains to conceal this new intrigue from either the king or the public. Pepys, under the date of April 7, 1668, has a curious passage in reference to their intimacy. "Mrs. Knipp tells me," he writes, "that my Lady Castlemaine is mightily in love with Hart of their house; and he is much with her in private; and she goes to him and do give him many presents; and that the thing is most certain, and Beck Marshall only privy to it, and the means of bringing them together; which is a very odd thing, and by this means she is even with the king's love to Mrs. Davis." Mrs. Grundy, as well as Beck Marshall, soon became aware of the beauty's new fancy.

But the most celebrated of her intrigues, apart from her connection with the king, was with the handsome Churchill, afterwards the great Duke of Marlborough, who is popularly supposed to have owed much of his splendid fortune to her favour. According to De Gram-

mont, their acquaintance began about 1666, and it appears to have continued until 1668, when it was revealed to the king by the Duke of Buckingham. Charles surprised him in the lady's chamber, and to avoid discovery he leapt out of the window. The "hazardous feat," as Macaulay calls it, was rewarded by a present of five thousand pounds, with which "the prudent young hero instantly bought an annuity of five hundred a year, well secured on landed property." In the licentious *New Atalantis* of Mrs Manley, the intrigue is recorded with many minute particulars, but there seems no foundation for the scandal that the Duke, at a subsequent period, refused to lend even twenty guineas to his generous mistress. The calumny has, of course, been perpetuated by Pope :

"The gallant, too, to whom she paid it down,  
Lived to refuse his mistress half a crown."

From De Grammont's lively pages it would seem that Charles might have been enlightened by others than Buckingham upon his mistress's new attachment, and he charges Churchill with the indelicacy of proclaiming everywhere his good fortune, "A man," he says, "who, from an ensign in the Guards, was raised to such a fortune, must certainly possess an uncommon share of prudence, not to be intoxicated with his happiness. Churchill boasted



in all places of the new favour he had received ; the Duchess of Cleveland, who neither recommended to him circumspection in his behaviour, nor in his conversation, did not seem to be in the least concerned at his indiscretion. Thus this intrigue was become a general topic in all companies, when the court arrived in London, and occasioned an immense number of speculations and reasonings ; some said she had already presented him with Jermyn's pension, and Jacob Hall's salary, because the merits and qualifications of both were united in his person ; others maintained that he had too indolent an air, and too delicate a shape, long to maintain himself in her favour ; but all agreed, that a man who was the favourite of the king's mistress, and brother to the duke's favourite (Arabella Churchill), was in a fair way of preferment, and could not fail to make his fortune. As a proof, the Duke of York soon after gave him a place in his household, this was naturally to be expected ; but the king, who did not think that Lady Cleveland's kindness to him was a sufficient recommendation to his favour, thought proper to forbid him the court.”

Goodman, the actor, was also distinguished by the Duchess's notice. Oldmixon tells an anecdote respecting them which, if not true, is at least *ben trovato*. “This woman,” he says, “was so infamous in her amours, that

she made no scruple of owning her lovers, among whom was Goodman the player, who so narrowly escaped the gallows some years after; and the fellow was so insolent upon it, that one night, when the queen was at the theatre, and the curtain, as usual, was immediately ordered to be drawn up, Goodman cried, 'Is my duchess come?' and being answered, no, he swore terribly the curtain should not be drawn till the duchess came, which was at the instant, and saved the affront to the queen." Enriched by her bounty he grew independent of his profession, and used to say he would never act *Alexander the Great*, (in Nat. Lee's play) but when 'his duchess' was sure to be present in the boxes. He was a dashing, airy, reckless fellow, who took to the road as readily as to the stage, and subsequently showed his gratitude to the duchess by bribing an Italian quack to poison two of her children. The poison was not administered, and Goodman could only be prosecuted for a misdemeanour; but he was tried, sentenced, and heavily fined. In 1695, he joined Fenwicke in his plot against William III, but escaped to the continent when the bubble burst, and thenceforth passed into oblivion.

The Duchess's last favourite before her final separation from Charles, was William Wycherley, the dramatist, whom she used to visit in



his lodgings at the Temple, disguised as a milliner. The origin of this intimacy can hardly be related in language sufficiently decorous for our pages. Buckingham swore he would make it known to the king, but accidentally meeting the wit at a friend's house, was so charmed with his graceful manners and witty conversation, that he became his liberal patron.

During the flush of her influence over the easy Charles, this commanding beauty obtained a large share of the public plunder. Her regular income was probably not less than £35,000 per annum—equal to about £100,000 at the present value of money—while she made immense sums by disposing of the king's leases, places in the Custom House, and “promotions, spiritual and temporal.” She was as lavish as she was grasping; dressed superbly, and played recklessly. Pepys speaks of her losing £25,000 in one sum at play, and, at another time, of her winning £15,000. She was not only profuse in her gifts to her lovers, but capable of acts of generous charity, which most of Charles' mistresses would have shrunk from. Her beauty, like her character, was of the lofty imperious order, that dazzles and overpowers, commands rather than wins, subdues the reason by its influence on the passions. Lely has painted her as Minerva; he should rather have depicted her as Juno. With the chaste and

blue-eyed Athené, she had no points of similarity, but she might justly have been compared to the haughty, dazzling, and voluptuous Queen of the Olympian Heaven.

Weary of her violent temper, and disgusted by her repeated infidelities, the king gave her permission in 1670 to retire into France, where she mostly resided during the remainder of her life. At Paris she was not without admirers; and Montagu, afterwards the first Duke of that family, completely succumbed to her irresistible charms. The Chevalier de Châtillon also enrolled himself among her gallants, and her intrigue with him became so notorious as to arouse the anger of Charles, who though he had discarded his haughty mistress, seems to have been unable to repress his irritation at her infidelities. To his remonstrances she replied with contemptuous impertinence.

“I promise you,” she wrote, “that for my conduct, it shall be such, as that you nor nobody shall have occasion to blame me. And I hope you will be just to what you said to me, which was at my house, when you told me you had letters of mine; you said, ‘Madam, all that I ask of you, for your own sake, is, live so for the future as to make the least noise you can, and I care not who you love.’”

Love! oh, Love! what sin, what follies,



what weaknesses we seek to disguise under thy sacred name !

By a species of poetical justice, the beauty who, in the bloom of her youth, as well as in the summer of her charms, had awed her lovers by the fury of her temper and the violence of her disposition, fell, in her old age, under a yoke not less severe than she herself had formerly loved to impose. She was in her 65th year, (November 25, 1705,) when she married the celebrated Beau Fielding, a man who had nothing but a handsome face and a graceful figure, to balance against a ruined character and a burden of debts. He behaved to her with great brutality, but she fortunately discovered that he was already married to a woman of the name of Wadsworth, who had passed herself upon him as an heiress ; indicted him for bigamy, and obtained a divorce. The beau, thus cut short in his career of splendour and violence, returned to his real wife, whom he pardoned for her share in his downfall, and died under her care.

The Duchess did not long survive this mortifying incident. After a short illness, she expired of dropsy, at her house at Chiswick, on the 9th of October, 1709. She was attended in her last moments by Roman Catholic priests.

Her children by Charles II—all of whom

were pensioned upon much enduring England —were Charles Fitzroy, Duke of Southampton, born in King Street, Westminster, in June, 1662; Henry Fitzroy, Duke of Grafton, born September 20, 1663, whom the king at first refused to acknowledge; George Fitzroy, Duke of Northumberland, born in one of the Fellow's rooms in Merton College, Oxford, on the 28th of December, 1665; Anne Fitzroy, or Palmer, Countess of Sussex, born February 29, 1662; and Barbara Fitzroy, born on the 16th of July, 1672, whom the king privately disowned, but consented to acknowledge in public. The Duchess's husband, Lord Castlemaine, believed her to be his daughter; and the Earl of Chesterfield was also reputed to be her father. This young lady of doubtful parentage became a nun in the English convent at Pontoise.

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*Authorities* :—Pepys' Diary, ed. Lord Braybrooke; Burnet's History of His Own Times; Life of Beau Fielding, prefixed to the Selected State Trials; Count Grammont's Memoirs, ed. Sir Walter Scott; Macaulay's England; Dramatic Miscellanies, Vol. III; Colley Cibber's Apology; Mrs. Jameson; Mrs. Manley's New Atalantis; Jesse, &c.



ELIZABETH HAMILTON,  
COUNTESS DE GRAMMONT.

A.D. 6411—1708.

VOL. I.

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ELIZABETH HAMILTON,  
COUNTESS DE GRAMMONT.

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THIS fascinating lady must be included in our gallery of Famous Beauties, if only for the celebrity with which she is invested in the witty Chronicle, written by her brother, and inspired by her husband,—Count Anthony Hamilton's *Memoirs of De Grammont*. She has a right to a place, moreover, on account of the deathless charms immortalized by Lely, who

“On the animated canvas stole  
The sleepy eye, that spoke the melting soul.”

Among all the portraits painted by that celebrated master, it is generally esteemed the most exquisite in conception, expression, and finish; and he himself acknowledges to have drawn it with particular pleasure. But still

more charming is the picture preserved in the famous Memoirs, where the pen has surpassed the pencil in delicacy of colouring, and the "artist in words" has delineated every feature with rare sensibility and marvellous taste.

"Miss Hamilton," he says, "was at the happy age when the charms of the fair sex begin to bloom ; she had the finest shape, the loveliest neck, and most beautiful arms in the world ; she was majestic and graceful in all her movements ; and she was the original after which all the ladies copied in their taste and air of dress. Her forehead was open, white, and smooth ; her hair was well set, and fell with ease into that natural order which it is so difficult to imitate. Her complexion was possessed of a certain freshness, not to be equalled by borrowed colours ; her eyes were not large, but they were lively, and capable of expressing whatever she pleased ; her mouth was full of graces, and her contour uncommonly perfect ; nor was her nose, which was small, delicate, and *retroussé*, the least ornament of so lovely a face. . . . Her mind was a proper companion for such a form ; she did not endeavour to shine in conversation by those sprightly sallies which only puzzle, and with still greater care she avoided that affected solemnity in her discourse, which produces stupidity ; but, without any eagerness to talk, she just said what she



ought, and no more. She had an admirable discernment in distinguishing between solid and false wit ; and far from making an ostentatious display of her abilities, she was reserved, though very just in her decisions ; her sentiments were always noble, and even lofty to the highest extent, when there was occasion ; nevertheless, she was less prepossessed with her own merit than is usually the case with those who have so much. Formed, as we have described, she could not fail of commanding love ; but so far was she from courting it, that she was scrupulously nice with respect to those whose merit might entitle them to cherish any pretensions to her."

Such a portrait makes one in love with the woman it professes to represent ; and envy might be tempted to conclude, that it was rather the ideal of some poetic Diana than a transcript of a veritable flesh-and-blood beauty. Undoubtedly, the natural partiality of the brother, and the pride of the husband, whose united skill has been exerted to produce so agreeable an *ensemble*, have filled in the outline with too flattering colours, and heightened the charms of nature by the graces of art. But when for this fond exaggeration due allowance shall have been made, there will still remain enough to justify us in regarding Elizabeth

Hamilton as one of the most fascinating women of her age and nation.

She was the eldest daughter of Sir George Hamilton, and born in 1641. Her soldier-father, a loyal cavalier, who fought on the side of Charles I. during the Civil war, was the fourth son of James, first Earl of Abercorn ; her mother was Mary, grand-daughter of Walter, eleventh Earl of Ormond, and sister of James, the first and famous Duke of Ormond. We possess no record of her early years, and our knowledge of the fair lady begins with her introduction to Charles the Second's gay and licentious court in 1661. Her rare personal charms, united with no ordinary degree of wit, judgment and sensibility, made her at once an object of admiration, and exposed her to the degrading homage of the loose courtiers of a voluptuous sovereign. Her virtue—or her prudence—repulsed every comer, and the biographer of De Grammont enumerates with ill-concealed satisfaction the many distinguished wooers whose addresses she rejected.

The highest in rank and the most important of her lovers, was the Duke of York, who had been captivated by a glance at her portrait in Lely's studio. His proposals, however, being neither flattering nor honourable, were haughtily rejected. The Duke of Richmond, a gamester and a drunkard ; the heir of Norfolk, a wealthy

simpleton ; the brave and handsome Falmouth, who afterwards died a hero's death in one of the great sea fights with the Dutch ; the two Russells, uncle and nephew ; and the invincible Henry Jermyn, in succession acknowledged the power of her charms, and offered her their hands. They were refused. The Count de Grammont next presented himself, and was more successful, though in moral character he was not superior to his predecessors, and in fortune was their inferior.

This celebrated wit, who has become so familiar to us through the graphic pages of Count Hamilton's Memoirs, was born in 1621. Having been banished from France by Louis XIV., for entering himself against that monarch in the lists of love with Mademoiselle La Motte Houdancourt, he repaired to the court of Charles II., where he immediately became the "observed of all observers." He was handsome, graceful, and accomplished ; his manners possessed an indescribable fascination ; his address was polished and easy ; his conversation light and amusing. But his enemies accused him of being treacherous in his friendships, cruel in his jealousies, and trifling in his loves. He was assuredly a man of unprincipled character, and as false towards a friend as he was fickle to a mistress ; but an undefinable brilliancy of manner, which dazzled every eye, imposed on the judgment of all whom he came

in contact, and it was only those whom he had defrauded or betrayed that could distinguish the *clinquant* from the pure metal.\*

Of that graceful persiflage in which he excelled, some traces have been preserved. One day, when Charles was dining in state, he bade Grammont remark, that he was served upon the knee—a mode peculiar to the English court. “I thank your majesty,” he replied, “for the explanation; I thought they were begging your pardon for giving you so bad a dinner.”

The governor of a town which had capitulated easily to his forces, said to him, “I will tell you a secret; I surrendered so quickly because I was in want of powder.” “Secret for secret,” replied De Grammont; “I granted you such an easy capitulation because I was in want of ball.”

He used to say that he hated sick people, but loved them directly they recovered their health.

Louis XIV, playing at the then popular game of tric-trac, disputed a throw with his opponent, and the by-standers, who were made arbitrators, professed themselves unable to decide. The question was referred to De Grammont, who, immediately, without moving from the further end of the salon, declared against the king.

\* Those of our readers who would learn more of De Grammont may compare the bitter pages of Bussy Rabutin, with the flattering ones of his friend St. Evremond.

“But you have not heard the case,” says Louis.  
“Ah, sire,” replied the Count, “if your majesty had but a shadow of right, would these gentlemen have found it difficult to decide in your favour ?”

A favourable estimate of De Grammont’s character is given in St. Evremond’s epitaph upon him :

“Here lies the Count de Grammont, stranger !  
Old Evremond’s continual theme :  
He who shared Condé’s every danger,  
May envy from the bravest claim.  
Wouldst know his art in courtly life ?  
It match’d his courage in the strife.  
Wouldst ask his favour with the fair ?  
Who ever lived could match him there ?  
His wit to scandal never stoop’d,  
His mirth to folly never droop’d ;  
He still preserv’d his youth’s *présage*  
As courtier, husband, and in old age.  
But went he to confession duly ?  
At matins, mass, and vespers steady ?  
Fervent in prayer ? To tell you truly,  
He left these cares to his good lady.  
We may once more see a Turenne,  
Condé himself may have his double,  
But to make Grammont o’er again,  
Would cost Dame Nature too much trouble.”

There was much in De Grammont’s character and disposition that Miss Hamilton was well able to appreciate. Her quick intellect would acknowledge the delicacy of his wit ; her playful disposition would sympathize with his fond-

ness for intrigue and mystification. She herself was prone to practical jests, of a kind that would hardly be tolerable in modern society or practised by a modern belle. In one of these De Grammont played a principal part.

The queen had arranged a superb masquerade, in which the various actors were to assume the dress of different nations. Miss Hamilton seized the opportunity to bring out the follies of two of the most conspicuous fools of the court ; the one, Lady Muskerry—the other, Miss Blague, one of the Duchess of York's maids of honour.

Lady Muskerry was one of those unfortunate beings who seem born to be ridiculous,—unhappy creatures, without whom wits and satirists would be deprived of their vocation ! She was an heiress, and nature, always impartial, deprives those of beauty whom she loads with wealth. Her figure was ungrateful ; she limped ; and her countenance was so disagreeable that the most enthusiastic lover would not have paid it a compliment.

“ Miss Blague,” says Count Hamilton, “ was ridiculous in a different fashion. The figure was neither good or bad ; her face bore the appearance of the greatest insipidity, and her complexion was the same all over : she had two little hollow eyes, adorned with white eyelashes as long as one's finger. With these

attractions she placed herself in ambuscade to surprise unwary hearts; but she might have done so in vain, had it not been for the arrival of the Marquis de Brisacier. Heaven seemed to have made them for each other: he had in his person and manners every requisite to dazzle a creature of her character; he talked eternally, without saying anything, and in his dress, exceeded the most extravagant fashions. Miss Blague believed that all this finery was on her account; and the Marquis believed that her long eyelashes had never taken aim at any but himself. Everybody perceived the strength of their mutual inclination, but they had only conversed by such interpreters when Miss Hamilton resolved upon intermeddling in their affairs."

She began with Lady Muskerry, giving to rank the precedence it deserved. Her two principal foibles were dress and dancing; and Miss Hamilton, accordingly, wrote her a note as if from Queen Catherine, inviting her to the masquerade, and enjoining upon her to attend in Babylonian fashion. A description of this fashion accompanied the invitation. Lord Muskerry, aware of his wife's deformity and keenly sensible of the ridicule she caused by figuring in the dance, had felt assured the Queen *would not* injure the effect of the masquerade by naming his wife as one of the dancers. But he nevertheless advised her

very seriously to become only a spectator of the entertainment, even if the queen had the cruelty to engage her in it. The arrival of the supposed royal invitation, however, undid all that Lord Muskerry had flattered himself he had effected, and the silly lady immediately got into her coach and drove to the merchants who traded to the Levant, in order to obtain accurate information of the way in which ladies of quality dressed in Babylon !

The plot laid for Miss Blague was of a different kind. While she was in love with Brisacier, and Brisacier in love with her, Miss Price hated Miss Blague, and was willing enough to contend against her for the good graces of the French marquis. Miss Hamilton had by her several pairs of gauntlets, which were then very much in vogue. She sent a pair to Miss Blague, accompanied with four yards of pale yellow riband, and the following note :

“ You were the other day more charming than all the fair women in the world : you looked yesterday still finer than you did the day before. If you continue thus, what will become of my poor heart ? that for a long time that has been the prey of your pretty little *pig's eyes* (*des yeux marcassins*). Shall you be at the masquerade to-morrow ? but can there be any pleasure in an entertainment at

which you are not present? It does not signify. I shall know you in whatever disguise you may assume, but I shall be better informed of my fate by the use you make of the presents I send you; knots of riband for your hair, and a pair of gloves for the loveliest hands in the universe."

The mischievous beauty having thus entangled Miss Blague, proceeded to render Miss Price an accomplice in her plot. She made her a present of a similar pair of gauntlets, with a few knots of the same riband, which she declared would admirably harmonize with Miss Price's brown complexion. The mystified lady was profuse with her thanks, and promised to do herself the honour of wearing gloves and ribands at the next day's masquerade. "You will oblige me by doing so," said *la belle* Hamilton, "but if you mention that such a trifle as this comes from me, I shall never forgive you, nor," she continued, "do you go and rob poor Miss Blague of the Marquis Brisacier, as you have robbed her of her former lovers. I know very well that it is wholly in your power; you are witty, you speak French, and did he but once converse with you ever so little, he would be completely yours." This was enough: Miss Blague was only ridiculous and coquettish, but Miss Price was ridiculous, coquettish and malicious.

The day arrived, and Whitehall was resplendent with the glow of jewels, the shimmer of satins, and the gleam of snowy plumes. Never had the lovely looked so lovely ; never had the witty been wittier, or the wealthy so lavish of their wealth. The dances had begun, when De Grammont addressed himself to the king and his immediate circle. "Sire," said he, with a low bow, and with a countenance which revealed nothing, "as I was getting out of my chair I was stopped by a devil of a phantom in masquerade, who endeavoured to persuade me that the queen had commanded me to dance with her. I excused myself as politely as possible, and she then charged me to find out who was to be her partner. Your Majesty, therefore, will do well to give orders about it promptly, for she lies in ambush in her coach ready to seize upon all those who pass through Whitehall. It is worth while, *par Dieu*, to see her dress ! She must at least be encumbered with sixty or seventy ells of gauze and silver tissue, to say nothing of a pyramid upon her head adorned with a hundred thousand baubles."

The whole assembly was surprised at this account, for all were present who had really been invited. Charles reflected for a moment, and then, as if seized with a sudden conviction, exclaimed, "I bet it is the Duchess of New-



castle." "And I," said Lord Muskerry, in a whisper to Miss Hamilton, "will wager it is another fool, for I am very much mistaken if it is not my wife."

He hastened out of the saloon, discovered that his conjecture was not erroneous, and escorted the Babylonian lady back to her own mansion.

The dance proceeded, and Miss Hamilton, glorying in the success of one of her plots, was soon made aware that an equal good fortune had attended the other. Miss Blague burst upon the throng in all the glory of yellowness. Her complexion was yellower than saffron, and her hair was loaded with yellow coloured riband. Ever and anon, as if to signalize to Brisacier the extent of her devotion, she raised to her head her victorious hands, adorned with the gloves which she supposed to be his *gage d'amour*. But what was her surprise, and what her consternation, when she discovered Miss Price also wearing the emblems of Brisacier's affection; yellow ribands flying among *her* curls, and Parisian gauntlets decorating *her* hands. Her surprise soon deepened into jealousy, when she saw her rival entering into a lively conversation with Brisacier, and her jealousy warmed into hatred when the Marquis excused himself from dancing with her. The pleasure of Miss Hamilton and her

fellow-plotters was now complete, and Miss Blague's jealous indignation was so conspicuous as to afford amusement to the whole court.

Such were the pastimes of the gay Beauties of England in the reign of Charles the Second; and from these we may infer the character and extent of the influence they exercised upon society. To the low moral standard of women in that age must in truth be attributed the low moral standard of the men. Rochesters and Buckinghams would have been impossible had there been no Castlemaines, no Stewarts, no Churchills, and the licentious Court of Charles II, must have abated much of its grossness, and preserved at least an outward appearance of decency, had women valued their honour more, and paid a greater respect to the beauty of modest womanhood. Nor was the Court singular in its open and shameless debauchery. A similar license prevailed in every rank of society, and the citizen's wife and daughters were as dissolute as the bold Beauties that fluttered at Whitehall. This deterioration began at a period anterior to the Restoration, and may, perhaps, be dated from the reign of James I., when vice was openly worshipped in high places, and harlotry was rewarded with lavish honours. As is the character of woman, so is the tone of society, which woman creates, regulates, and inspires.

Man becomes what woman makes him, and the Pembrokes and Southamptons of the Elizabethan era as certainly produce Sir Philip Sidneys, as the titled courtesans of the reign of the Merry Monarch generate Ethereges, Sedleys, and Buckinghams.

After some years of wooing, the fickle Count de Grammont became the husband of the beautiful Hamilton. But notwithstanding the apparent warmth and duration of his addresses, it is doubtful whether he really intended them seriously, and his marriage is said to have been forced upon him. Having made his peace with Louis XIV, he had received permission to return to France. In all haste, he set out on his journey, and, it is said, without bringing matters to a proper conclusion with Miss Hamilton. Her brothers immediately pursued him, and came up with him near Dover, resolved to extort from him an explanation, or to obtain satisfaction with their swords. "Chévalier de Grammont," they exclaimed, "have you forgotten nothing in London!" "Excuse me," he rejoined, with his accustomed self-possession, "I forgot to marry your sister."\* He returned with them to London, and espoused the fair lady, Charles II. honouring the nuptials with his presence.

\* This incident, we are told, suggested to Molière his comedy of "Le Mariage Forcé."

After the birth of their first child, in 1669, they repaired to France. The good-natured king recommended him to his sister, Henrietta of Orléans. In a letter dated the 24th of October, he says, "I write to you yesterday, by the Compte de Grammont, but I believe this letter will come sooner to your handes ; for he goes by the way of Diep, with his wife and family, and now that I have named her, I cannot chuse but againe desire you to be kinde to her ; for, besides the merite her family has on both sides, she is as good a creature as ever lived. I believe she will passe for a handsome woman in France, though she has not yett, since her lying-in, recovered that good shape she had before, and I am afraide never will."

The English Beauty was not, however, very warmly received by *les grandes dames* of Louis the Fourteenth's Court. As her husband had succeeded by the death of his elder brother to an immense fortune, and as the king distinguished herself with peculiar favour, and appointed her Dame du Palais, it is very possible that the French ladies suffered themselves to be influenced in their judgment by the vulgar vices of jealousy and envy. To such a result the Countess's sharp wit and love of mischief may have contributed. As she grew older, her



character underwent a not uncommon change, for the beauty and the fine lady often becomes in mature years a strict devotee, as if she sought by her piety to obtain that influence in Heaven which her charms can no longer secure her upon earth ! St. Evremond preserves the record of a scene which is strikingly characteristic both of herself and her husband. The Count, he says, fell dangerously ill in the year 1696, and Louis the Fourteenth, knowing the nature of his past life, sent to him the Marquis Dangeau to enquire after his health, and advise him to think of God. Hereupon Count de Grammont, turning towards his wife, exclaimed, "Countess, if you don't look about you, Dangeau will cheat you (*vous escamotera*) out of my conversion."

Though at this time De Grammont was in his seventy-fifth year, he recovered from his illness, and following the example of his wife, devoted himself to religious duties. He lived cheerful, contented, and sincerely penitent, for another decade; and at length expired peacefully on the 10th of January, 1707, aged 86. His wife survived him but one year. Two children were the issue of their marriage, of whom, the elder, Claude Charlotte, married in 1694, Henry Howard, Viscount Stafford. The

younger became the Superior of the Canonesses in Lorraine.

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*Authorities* :—Memoirs of the Count de Grammont ; Life and Works of St. Evremond ; Madame Dunois ; History of the Court of Charles II ; Jesse ; Mrs. Jameson, &c.



F R A N C E S S T E W A R T,  
DUCHESS OF RICHMOND.

A.D. 1647—1702.



## F R A N C E S S T E W A R T,

DUCHESS OF RICHMOND.

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“ Let the mad poets say whate'er they please,  
Of the sweets of Fairies, Peris, Goddesses,  
There is not such a treat among them all,  
Haunters of cavern, lake, and waterfall,  
As a real woman, lineal indeed,  
From Pyrrha's pebbles or old Adam's seed.”

KEATS.

ONE cannot turn over the annals of the Court of Charles II, as recorded in the pages—fascinating but “improper”—of Madame Dunois or the Count De Grammont, without recognising as among the most conspicuous figures, the stately Frances Stewart, Duchess of Richmond. And though neither that astute beauty, the franker and bolder Cleveland, or the less worldly and more generous Nell Gwynne, can claim to be considered the types of an admirable and lofty womanhood, yet each deserves our notice as illustrating the influence

of woman upon society—as a social power, who, in her generation, regulated the code of fashion, and inspired the manners of the age. These brilliant and beautiful women were something more, unfortunately, than the mistresses of a king. Their supremacy was felt beyond the precincts of Windsor and Whitehall. Public opinion as yet had not attained to the proportions which would enable it to mould literature and art according to its will; and the artists and poets of the time, perhaps unknown to themselves, were influenced by the loose inspiration afforded by the fashionable beauties. Society is shaped and coloured by woman, and art and literature adapt themselves to the tone of society. Genius, indeed, will ever and anon shake off the social trammels, and a Milton chant the lofty music of “Paradise Lost,” in spite of the “scrannel strains” of a Sedley or an Etherege; but that music, though pealing far away into the echoing aisles of the future, has no charms for the giddy crowds that gather at the feet of lighter and gayer minstrels. To understand the age of Charles II., it is then, as needful to enter the boudoirs of its Aspasia and Phrynes, as the closets of its statesmen; to mingle with the glittering throng in the salons of Whitehall, as to accompany Sir William Temple to East Sheen, or follow the members of the Cabal to Ham House.

Of Frances Theresa Stewart, the biographer can have little to record, but the weaknesses of a great beauty, and the artifices of a woman whose ambition surpassed her ability. In a licentious court she preserved her virtue, it is true, until her marriage; but her modesty was the offspring of calculation rather than of principle, and her blandishments were bestowed with so little reserve, that it was evident she did not so much condemn the sin, as doubt its profitableness. As long as there seemed a prospect of her sharing the throne with the amorous Charles, she was obdurate to his proposals. When that prospect became hopeless, she concluded a marriage in which her affections were not concerned, because it was inferior only to a royal alliance, and because it enabled her to be complaisant to the king without ruining her reputation with the public. Ignorant of a generous emotion or an elevated sentiment, incapable of a noble thought or a lofty passion, averse to literature, unable to appreciate art, we confess that she seems to us one of the most despicable of the beauties whom Lely painted and De Grammont has immortalized.

She was born about the year 1647, the daughter of Walter Stewart, son of Walter, second Lord Blantyre. Educated in France, she came to England after the Restoration, in the suite of the Queen Dowager, Henrietta Maria;

and her English loveliness being improved by Parisian art, she immediately took a foremost place among the “stars” of Charles the Second’s court. It is said that Louis Quatorze was unwilling to lose so fair a lady from Versailles. “The king of France,” says Pepys, “would have had her mother, who is one of the most cunning women in the world, to have let her stay in France, saying that he loved her, not as a mistress, but as one that would marry as well as any lady in France.” And when the cunning woman, who saw a fairer prospect for her daughter in London than in Paris, was still resolute in her departure, he presented *La Belle Stewart* with a costly jewel as a farewell gift.

Soon after her arrival at the English court, she was appointed one of the maids of honour to the queen. The period when she first attracted the attention of the king is uncertain, but her young and splendid beauty could hardly long escape his notice; and as the Duchess of Cleveland chose to adopt her as her protégée, either secure in her own attractions, or depreciating the charms of the Stewart, Charles must have frequently been brought into contact with her. His admiration soon ripened into passion. This growing partiality was observed by every person in the court, and the haughty Castlemaine alone seemed indifferent to it. “She was not satisfied,” says De Grammont, “to appear with-



out any degree of uneasiness at a preference which all the court began to remark ; she even affected to make Miss Stewart her favourite, and invited her to all the entertainments she made for the king ; and, in confidence of her own charms, with the greatest indiscretion, she often retained her to sleep with her. The king, who seldom neglected to visit the Countess before she rose, seldom failed likewise to find Miss Stewart in bed with her. The most indifferent objects have charms in a new attachment ; however, the imprudent Countess was not jealous of this rival's appearing with her in such a situation, being confident, that whenever she thought fit, she could triumph over all the advantages which these opportunities could afford Miss Stewart ; but," adds De Grammont, "she was quite mistaken."

The beauty of the fair Frances is beyond dispute. We are not obliged to rely on Lely's flattering canvas ; an admirable likeness of her having been engraved by Rotier, under the form of Britannia, for Charles the Second's coinage. De Grammont describes her in vivid colours. "Her figure," he says, "was more showy than engaging ; it was hardly possible for a woman to have less wit or more beauty ; all her features were fine and regular ; but her shape was not good ; yet she was slender, straight enough, and taller than the generality of women ; she was

very graceful, danced well, and spoke French better than her mother tongue ; she was well-bred, and possessed in perfection that air of dress which is so much admired, and which cannot be attained, unless it be taken when young in France." Pepys, for her sake, became unfaithful towards the splendid Castlemaine. "Hearing," he says (July 13, 1663), "that the king and queen are rode abroad with the ladies of honour to the Park ; and, seeing a great crowd of gallants staying here to see their return, I also staid, walking up and down. By and by the king and queen, who looked in this dress, a white laced waistcoat, and a crimson short petticoat, and her hair dressed *à la négligence*, mighty pretty ; and the king rode hand in hand with her. Here was also my Lady Castlemaine, who rode among the rest of the ladies ; but the king took, methought, no notice of her ; nor when she 'light, did anybody press, as she seemed to expect, and staid for it, to take her down, but was taken down by her own gentleman. She looked mighty out of humour, and had a yellow plume in her hat, which all took notice of, and yet is very handsome but very melancholy ; nor did anybody speak to her, or she so much as smile or speak to anybody. I followed them up into White-hall, and into the queen's presence, where all the ladies walked, talking, and fiddling with



their hats and feathers, and changing and trying one another's by one another's heads, and laughing. But it was the finest sight to me, considering their great beautys and dress, that ever I did see in all my life. But, above all, Mrs. Stewart in this dress, with her hat cocked and a red plume, with her sweet eye, little Roman nose, and excellent *taille*, is now *the greatest beauty I ever saw*, I think, in my life ; and, if ever woman can, do exceed my Lady Castlemaine, at least, in this dress ; nor do I wonder if the king changes, which I verily believe is the reason of his coldness to my Lady Castlemaine."

Pepys beheld her again on the 15th of July, 1664, and his admiration did not cool. Staying in one of the galleries at White Hall, "there comes out of the chayre-room, Mrs. Stewart, with her hair all about her eares, having her picture taken there. There was the king and twenty more, I think, standing by all the while, and a lovely creature she in the dress seemed to be."\*

The king's passion for her increased daily, despised all the outward restraints of decency, and approached as nearly to an overmastering love as it was possible for a Stuart to feel. The cold beauty preserved her chastity, but in

\* Was this the dress—with golden cuirass and plumed helmet—in which Lely painted her?

other respects left Charles but little to complain of. To recur again to the graphic pages of Pepys. "Mr. Pierce," he says, "told me how the king is now become besotted upon Mrs. Stewart, that he gets into corners, and will be with her half an hour together, kissing her to the observation of all the world ; and she now stays by herself and expects it, as my Lady Castlemaine did use to do. And it is thought that this new wench is so subtle, that it is verily thought, if the queen had died, he would have married her." Again, "Mr. Pierce tells me, that my Lady Castlemaine is not at all set by, by the king, but that he do doat upon Mrs. Stewart only, and, that, to the leaving of all business in the world, and to the open slighting of the queen ; that he values not who sees him, or stands by him while he dallies with her openly : and then privately in her chamber below, where the very sentrys observe him going in and out ; and that so commonly, that the duke, or any of the nobles, when they would ask where the king is, they will ordinarily say, 'is the king above or below,' meaning with Mrs. Stewart."

This royal madness suggested to Buckingham and others a plot for divorcing the queen from her profligate husband, that he might be at liberty to marry the lovely favourite. Wild and preposterous as the project appeared, it was generally talked of, and even spread to Portugal,

where it excited great uneasiness. But Charles was incapable equally of such an act of folly as of such a crime; for if morally it was criminal, politically it was absurd, and might have shaken his throne. It is certain, however, that when the queen was seized with her dangerous malady in 1663, the beauty calculated upon soon attaining the object of her ambition. "Then it was," says De Grammont, "that Miss Stewart was greatly pleased with herself for the resistance she had made, though she had paid dearly for it: a thousand flattering hopes of greatness and glory filled her heart, and the additional respect that was universally paid her contributed not a little to increase them." But the queen recovered, and the dazzling vision of the crown matrimonial of England faded for ever from the ambitious lady's eyes.

Apart from her marvellous perfection of face and figure, Miss Stewart does not appear to have been gifted with qualities calculated to charm a monarch. She was childish in her behaviour; laughed at everything; and her unaffected taste for frivolous pastimes, was only allowable in a girl about twelve or thirteen years old. A child, however, she was, except that she played with hearts instead of dolls. Her smiles might always be secured by the courtier who proposed a game of "blind-man's

buff;" and while her compeers staked large sums of money on the chances of the cards, she, more innocently, amused herself in building them up into towns and houses, while eager gallants stood around, handed her the playthings, or imitated her example.

James Hamilton, who was attracted by her beauty, endeavoured to win her favour by joining eagerly in these amusements. De Grammont represents him as first obtaining a position in her good graces through a ridiculous achievement. "The old Lord Carlingford," says Hamilton, "was at her apartment one evening, showing her how to hold a lighted wax-candle in her mouth, and the great secret consisted in keeping the burning end there a long time without its being extinguished. I have, thank God, a pretty large mouth, and, in order to out-do her teacher, I took two candles into my mouth at the same time, and walked three times round the room without their going out. Every person present adjudged me the prize of this illustrious experiment, and Killigrew maintained that nothing but a lantern could stand in competition with me." The Duke of Buckingham, another of her lovers, excelled in the construction of towers of cards. He had also an agreeable voice, and Miss Stewart was passionately fond of singing. No one could retail a scandal with a better grace or a wittier



turn, and Miss Stewart doted upon scandal. He soon eclipsed Count Hamilton in her favour, and made himself so necessary to Miss Stewart's amusement, that she sent all over the town to seek for him, when he did not attend the king to her apartments. But when he presumed to play the passionate lover he met with a severe repulse, and the cold selfish beauty went on her way—not exactly in "maiden meditation," but certainly "fancy free."

Of a purer, because more earnest, character was the love of Francis Digby, son of the Earl of Bristol, whose heart and mind were so filled with the passion of her loveliness, that when he found himself spurned from her feet with cool contempt, he would grow weary of living, and sought a glorious death in the great sea-fight with the Dutch in 1672. This act was celebrated by Dryden in some verses which Buckingham afterwards parodied in "The Rehearsal."

Philip Rotier, the medallist, was also enamoured of the triumphant lady, and immortalized his passion by representing her as Britannia on the reverse of the copper coinage issued in 1655. The figure of Britannia sitting on a globe, holding in her right hand an olive branch, and in her left a spear and shield, is still retained in our issues from the Royal

Mint. The incident suggested some indifferent rhymes to the poet Waller.

The Duke of Richmond at length entered the lists to subdue the haughty fair one, and as he offered a ducal coronet and was himself of royal blood, his attentions were encouraged, and his intemperance and frivolity overlooked. The beauty saw that there was no chance of the Queen Consort's crown, and wisely contented her ambition with the strawberry leaves. Charles was enraged at the appearance of so formidable a rival, and sought to prevail upon Miss Stewart to dismiss him by the offer of the ducal title, of an estate sufficient for the support of such a dignity, and the banishment of all his other mistresses. But Miss Stewart continued inflexible. She replied that already her reputation had been injured by the royal attentions, and would be irretrievably lost unless she speedily formed an honourable alliance. The Duke of Richmond made her a formal offer of his hand. It was accepted; and preparations were instantly made for her secret departure from court and a private marriage.

The king was not fully aware of the close relations established between the lady and her lover, when the Duchess of Cleveland suddenly opened his eyes. She had long been desirous of avenging herself upon the "inanimate idiot" for whom the king had deserted her, and eagerly



seized a fortunate opportunity. One night, when he had returned from Miss Stewart's apartments, in a very ill-humour at her virtuous obstinacy, the Duchess met him, and encountered him with a storm of indignant reproaches. "Be not offended," she said, at length, "because I so freely laugh at the gross impositions you endure. I cannot bear to see that such particular affections should make you the jest of your own court, and that you should be ridiculed with such impunity. I know that the affected Stewart has sent you away, under pretence of some indisposition, or perhaps some scruple of conscience; and I come to acquaint you that the Duke of Richmond will soon be with her, if he is not there already." With these words, she led the astonished sovereign towards Miss Stewart's apartments. She had previously taken care that her rival should obtain no intimation of their approach, and when they had gained the anteroom, she wished the king good night and retired.

"It was near midnight," says De Grammont: "the king, on his way, met his mistress's chambermaids, who respectfully opposed his entrance, and, in a very low voice, whispered his majesty that Miss Stewart had been very ill since he left her; but that, being gone to bed, she was, God be thanked, in a very fine sleep. 'That I must see,' said the king,

pushing the maid back, who had posted herself in his way. He found Miss Stewart in bed, indeed, but far from being asleep: the Duke of Richmond was seated at her pillow, and in all probability was less inclined to sleep than herself. The perplexity of the one party, and the rage of the other, were such as may easily be imagined in so singular a conjuncture. The king, who of all men was one of the mildest and most gentle, expressed his resentment to the Duke in terms such as he had never before been known to use. The latter was speechless and almost petrified: he saw his master and his king justly irritated.\* The first transports of rage on such occasions are dangerous. Miss Stewart's window was very convenient for a sudden revenge, the Thames flowing close beneath it. He cast his eyes upon it, and seeing the king more indignant and inflamed than he had thought his nature capable of, he made a profound bow, and retired, without replying a single word to the threats and menaces with which the king overwhelmed him.

“ Miss Stewart, having a little recovered from her first surprise, instead of justifying herself, began to talk most extravagantly, and said everything that could inflame the king's

\* De Grammont does not appear to perceive in how ridiculous and unworthy a position Charles himself was placed.



passion and resentment. Charles, sometimes furious with anger, sometimes relenting at her tears, and sometimes terrified at her threats, was so greatly agitated, that he knew not how to answer, either the nicety of a creature who wished to play the part of Lucretia under his own eyes, or the coolness with which she reprimanded and reproached him. In this suspense, love had almost entirely conquered all his anger, and had almost induced him to throw himself upon his knees, and entreat her pardon for the wrong he had done her, when she desired him to withdraw, and leave her in peace, at least the remainder of the night, without offending by a longer visit either those who had accompanied him, or conducted him to her apartments. This impudent (?) request provoked and irritated him to the highest degree. He retired abruptly, vowing never to see her more; and passed the most restless and unhappy night he had ever experienced since his restoration."

The Duke on the morrow retired from court; the king made his peace, as he thought, with the indignant but virtuous beauty; and never were the king's addresses so eager, and never had they been so favourably received, as after this stormy scene. But the calm surface concealed a troubled deep. On a tempestuous night, in March 1667, Miss Stewart escaped from her chambers in Whitehall, and joined

the Duke, who had secretly returned to town, at a small inn in Westminster. He received her with a rapturous welcome, and the adventurous fair, mounting on horseback, rode away in haste to the Duke's seat in Kent, where, on the following morning, the Duke's chaplain married them.

When the flight of the fair Stewart was discovered, Charles' indignation knew no limits, and became unkingly in its excess. Aware of the eagerness with which Clarendon had stimulated the Duke of Richmond to persevere in his suit—for the Chancellor feared the royal passion might become uncontrollable, and lead the king into some rash and perilous action—he poured out a torrent of reproaches upon Lord Courtney—Clarendon's son—and accused him of being an accomplice in the plot. It was not until the evening that he grew calm enough to receive his explanations. Even then, he could not be induced to forgive the disobedient lovers, and banished them from his court.

Pepys gives an explanation of the reasons which induced Miss Stewart to accept the Duke, that serves to put her conduct in a more favourable light than we have regarded it:—

“ April 26, 1667. Mr. Evelyn (he says) told me the whole story of Mrs. Stewart's going away from court, he knowing her well; and believes her, up to her leaving the court, to be as virtuous as any woman in the world; and

told me from a lord that she told it to but yesterday with her own mouth, and a sober man, that when the Duke of Richmond did make love to her, she did ask the king; and he did the like also; and that the king did not deny it, and told this lord that she was come to that pass, as to resolve to have married any gentleman of £1,500 a year that would have had her in honour: for it was come to that pass, that she could not longer continue at court without prostituting herself to the king, whom she had so long kept off, though he had liberty more than any other lord, or he ought to have, as to dalliance. She told this lord, that she had reflected upon the occasion she had given to the world, to think her a bad woman, and that she had no way but to marry and leave the court, rather in this way of misconduct than otherwise, that the world might see that she sought not anything but her honour; and she will never come to live at court, more than when she comes to kiss the queen her mistress's hands; and hopes, though she hath little reason to hope, she can please her lord so as to reclaim him, that they may yet live comfortably in the country on his estate. She told this lord that all the jewels she ever had given to her at court, or any other presents (more than the king's allowance of £700 per annum out of the privy purse for her clothes),

were at her first coming, the king did give her a necklace of pearl, of about £1,100 ; and afterwards, about seven months since, when the king had hopes to have obtained some courtesy of her, the king did give her some jewels, I have forgot what, and I think a pair of pendants. The Duke of York, being once her Valentine, did give her a jewel of about £800 ; and my Lord Mandeville, her Valentine this year, a ring of about £300 ; and the King of France would have had her mother (who, he says, is one of the most cunning women in the world), to have let her stay in France, saying that he loved her not as a mistress, but as one as he could marry as well as any lady in France ; and that, if she might stay, for the honour of his court, he would take care that she should not repent. But her mother, by command of the queen-mother (Henrietta Maria), thought rather to bring her into England, and the King of France did give her a jewel ; so that Evelyn believes she may be worth in jewels about £6000, and that is all she hath in the world ; and a worthy woman ; and in this hath done as great an act of honour as ever was done by woman. She is gone yesterday with her lord to Cobham" (Cobham Hall, near Gravesend, Kent.)

Either Charles's anger did not long endure, or he was unable to bear her absence for any



lengthened period. Within a twelvemonth he recalled her and her lord to court, appointed her a lady of the bed-chamber to his queen, and provided her with apartments in Somerset House. However admirable the resolutions with which she married the Duke, they proved of a sadly evanescent nature, and it is recorded that the Lucretia so obdurate to the king before marriage, was by no means inflexibly virtuous afterwards. It is even stated that Charles, in an excess of intemperance, once boasted to the husband of the kindness with which the wife treated him.

In 1669 the Duchess was seized with the small pox. During her illness Charles paid her the tenderest attention, and braved the risk of contagion in repeated visits. When she recovered she had lost her beauty, but it is to the king's honour that he continued to treat her with the most considerate regard.

On the 12th of December 1672, the Duke died, at Elsinore, whither he had been sent as Ambassador to the King of Denmark. The Duchess survived him thirty years; became, as most *passé* beauties do, a Roman Catholic; died in 1704, and bequeathed the bulk of her property to her nephew, the fifth Lord Blantyre. She also left some annuities to her cats,\*

\* Alluded to, but ungenerously, in Pope's well-known line,

“Gone to endow a hospital, or cat.”

or rather to the poor gentlewomen whom she charged with their maintenance:—"a delicate way," says Lord Hailes, "of providing for them, without making them feel that they owed their livelihood to her mere liberality."

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*Authorities* :—Burnet's History of His Own Times, Vol. I; Mrs. Jameson; Jesse; Pepys' Diary, Vols. I-III; Memoirs of the Count De Grammont; Sir J. Reresby's Memoirs, ed. 1735; Walpole's Anecdotes of Painters; Nathaniel Lee's Dramatic Works, dedication to "Theodosius," &c.

H E N R I E T T A M A R I A,  
DUCHESS OF ORLEANS.

A.D. 1644—1670.



## HENRIETTA MARIA, DUCHESS OF ORLEANS.

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“Doomed in her opening flower of life to know  
All a true Stuart’s heritage of woe.”

AGNES STRICKLAND.

THE brief but brilliant career—the suspicious and melancholy end—of Henrietta Maria, daughter of Charles I., entitle her to a place in these pages, which her beauty and remarkable attractions would also seem to claim.

She was born at Bedford House, Exeter, to which fair city of the West the fortunes of her mother had brought her on the 16th of June 1644, and beginning life in the hearing of war’s alarms, the shadow of strife and hostility rested upon the greater part of her brief and stormy history. Soon after her birth, her mother escaped from Exeter, which was menaced by the Commonwealth soldiery, and found shelter in Pendennis Castle, at the entrance of Falmouth Harbour. Here she embarked on

board a Dutch galliot, and succeeded in reaching unmolested the coast of France. The infant, thus deprived of a mother's care, was placed by King Charles in the custody of Anne Villiers, Countess of Morton, who discharged the responsibility with all the fidelity of a true woman.

When the Princess was two years old, it was determined to convey her to her mother in Paris, and the Countess set out from Oatlands on foot, both herself and the babe disguised in rustic attire to accomplish a difficult and perilous journey. The danger was increased by the innocent talkativeness of the royal infant, who took care to inform every person they encountered that the dress she wore was meaner than she was accustomed to. But every obstacle was surmounted by the perseverance and address of the Countess, and the loyalty of her attendants. The journey was effected in safety, and the infant Princess restored to the arms of her royal mother. Waller poetically alludes to the success of Lady Morton's daring enterprise:—

“ From armèd foes to bring a royal prize,  
Shows your brave heart victorious as your eyes.  
If Judith, marching with the general's head,  
Can give us passion when her story's read ;  
What may the living do, which brought away  
Though a less bloody, yet a nobler prey ?  
Who from our flaming Troy, with a bold hand  
Snatches her fair charge, the Princess, like a brand :



A brand ! preserved to warm some Prince's heart,  
And make whole kingdoms take her brother's part."

On her arrival in France she was received by the queen with a tender welcome, and soon became the ornament of the small court which assembled at the Convent of the Visitation at Chaillot. Sir John Reresby in his Memoirs, records a visit he paid shortly before the Restoration. "As I spoke the language of the country," says Sir John Reresby, "and danced pretty well, the young Princess, then about fifteen years of age, behaved towards me with all the civil freedom that might be. She made me dance with her, played on the harpsichord to me in her Highness's chamber, suffered me to wait on her as she walked in the garden, and sometimes to toss her in a swing between two trees, and in fine, to be present at all her innocent diversions."

The beauty of her person produced a great sensation when she made her *débüt* in the Parisian world, and her popularity was increased by the discovery that her wit was equal to her beauty, and her good-nature not inferior to her wit. Louis XIV., then in his young manhood, was touched by her brilliant charms,\* and there seems to have been

\* Madame La Fayette, however, expressly declares that the King openly showed a dislike to her person.

a transient project for his marriage to the lovely daughter of England. But his passion for Mademoiselle de la Vallière, and the policy of Cardinal Mazarin, soon dissipated the idea, even if it had ever been seriously entertained.\* The Count de Guiche, however, nourished a passionate attachment to the young beauty. So evident was his devotion, and so warmly was it reciprocated, that scandal accused the lovers of having transgressed the limits of innocence, but Elizabeth Duchess of Orléans, whose authority is considerable, denies that the calumny had any real foundation.

The Count de Treville was also one of her admirers, and Henrietta's susceptible heart, it is said, was not insensible to his homage. The story runs that on her death-bed, when seized with delirious fancies, she repeated the tender words, *Adieu Treville*; and that this proof of her fond remembrance, added to the piteous death of his mistress, so affected the gay courtier, that he retired for some years to a monastery. When he reappeared in the world, it was as a man sincerely devoted to the duties of religion.

In 1660 Charles II. was restored to the throne of his ancestors. The queen-mother immediately resolved on returning to England, though negotiations had already been begun for the espousal of the beautiful Henrietta to

\* See Illustrations (in Appendix).



Philip, Duke of Orléans, the younger brother of Louis XIV. At the gay court of Charles II. the Princess's beauty shone conspicuous, and her train was swelled by a throng of admiring courtiers. The Duke of Buckingham grew so enamoured of her, that his passion betrayed him into many acts of the most extravagant folly. Gossiping Pepys, however, did not share in the general enthusiasm : "The Princess Henrietta," he says, "is very pretty, but much below my expectation ; and her dressing of herself with her hair frizzed short up her ears, did make her seem so much the less to me. But my wife standing near her with two or three black patches on, and well dressed, did seem to me much handsomer than she."

During her absence, the queen-mother was urged by daily letters from the Duke to return to France, that the projected marriage might be carried out ; and so pressing were his entreaties that she could no longer refuse, though the season was rude and tempestuous for such a journey.

Charles accompanied her one day's stage. The Duke of Buckingham followed with all the court ; but instead of returning to London, like the others, he demanded and obtained permission to pass over into France, and with-

out servants or baggage, embarked at Portsmouth with the Queen.

“The wind was favourable on the first day, but on the morrow grew so contrary that the queen’s ship appeared in great danger of perishing. A general panic seized the crew and passengers, and the Duke of Buckingham, in his concern for one precious life, appeared overwhelmed with an inexpressible despair.

“At length the ship was rescued from her perilous situation, but it was necessary to put back to port.

“The Princess Henrietta was attacked with a very violent fever. She was courageous enough, however, to wish to re-embark as soon as the wind took a favourable turn; but as she was aboard ship, the measles showed themselves, so that while they could not sail out of harbour yet they could not put her ashore, lest her life should be imperilled by the agitation.

“Her illness was very dangerous. The Duke of Buckingham appeared like a madman, and in despair, when she was considered in peril. And as soon as she was well enough to dare a sea-voyage, and to set out for Hâvre, his jealousy of the anxious care which the English Admiral showed for the Princess was so extravagant, that he quarrelled with him without the shadow of a reason; and the queen-



mother, fearful of some disastrous result, ordered him to go forward to Paris, while she remained some time at Hâvre to recover her daughter's strength."

On her arrival at Paris, the Duke of Orléans immediately paid her a visit, and continued up to the day of their marriage to act the part of an ardent lover. Nothing was wanting on his side but—love; and the miracle of touching that hard and stony heart was not to be performed by any living woman. The Princess, however, soon discovered that he was capable of being jealous. Jealousy is as often the offspring of pride as love. At all events, a man who is in love with himself will assuredly be prone to jealous excesses, for he will think every smile his due—that every glance should be reserved for him, and will suspect the most innocent attention as concealing some hidden meaning. The extravagances of Buckingham a wise man would have regarded with indifference, but the Duke of Orléans thought them worthy of his anger, and it required the address of the queen-mother to convince him, at last, that they were only deserving of his laughter. But as he still remained indifferently satisfied, the susceptible but volatile Buckingham was constrained to return to England.

At length the marriage took place (March

31,1661,) and as it was Lent, the ceremony was conducted privately in the chapel of the Tuilleries. All the court hastened to render its homage to the Princess, who thenceforth was called Madame; and her wit, amiability, and address rendered her universally popular.

Shortly after her marriage, the Duke and herself took up their residence at the Tuilleries on the departure of the king and queen for Fontainebleau. It was at this time that all the élite of France repaired to do her homage; the cavaliers thought of nothing but paying her their court, the ladies of winning her good graces.

Madame de Valentinois—sister of the Count de Guiche—for whom, both on her own account and her brother's, the Duke felt all the affection of which he was capable; Mesdemoiselles de Créqui and de Châtillon, Mademoiselle de Tonnay Charente—afterwards so celebrated as Madame de Montespan, the mistress of Louis XIV.,—Mademoiselle de la Trémouille and Madame de La Fayette—were among the favoured friends of the Princess. They passed the day in her company. They followed her to court; on returning from the promenade they supped with her and the Duke. After supper, the salon was thrown open to the wit, grace and nobility of France, and the evening was beguiled with plays, and cards, and music.



Poets made rhymes upon Madame's beauty; the courtiers repeated her *bons-mots*; all Paris esteemed her affability and good-nature. The king returned to the Tuileries, and the Duke and Duchess repaired to Fontainebleau. The same brilliant court assembled around them there. Louis frequently visited them, and learned to admire the charms which he had once regarded with contemptuous indifference. Henrietta arranged little parties for his entertainment. The king in return gave her the management of the royal fêtes, and it seemed that the only pleasure he derived from them was the pleasure they afforded her. Thus passed a joyous winter and a festive spring. Summer came with its splendour and its softness. Then the beautiful Duchess went daily to the bath. She set out in her carriage, on account of the heat, and returned on horseback, followed by all her ladies, picturesquely attired, with a thousand plumes dancing on their heads, and accompanied by the king and the young nobility of the court. After supper the carriages were summoned, and to the sweet sound of violins the gay revellers drove round the shimmering canal for a great part of the moonlit summer-night.

So evident became the king's admiration, and so close an intimacy prevailed between him and the Princess, that it afforded the ma-

terial of incessant scandal. The queen-dowager waxed wroth at his pre-occupation, which almost wholly deprived her of his company. She communicated her suspicions to the Duke, who wanted but little to fire his smouldering jealousy. He broke into a storm of passion, and his rage opened the eyes of the royal lovers—or friends, which shall we name them? They felt all the disgrace of an open scandal, and it was secretly agreed between them that the king should ostensibly direct his attentions towards some lady of the court to prevent any further suspicions resting upon Madame. He chose for this purpose Mademoiselle de la Vallière, a young and beautiful nymph, fresh from the woods and vales of Orléans and Blois. The devotion which at first was feigned, soon became sincere; and Henrietta had the mortification of perceiving that she had lost her lover by the very means adopted to secure him.

The Count de Guiche, whom his contemporaries describe as a *preux chevalier*, outshining all the courtiers in bravery, goodness of heart and handsomeness of person, stepped forward to occupy at Henrietta's side the place left vacant by the king. A beautiful woman who has just experienced the falseness of her admirer, is always eager to soothe her wounded vanity by receiving the addresses of a new worshipper. Thus, Henrietta was not unwilling

to be consoled for her disappointment with the king. Towards Louis, however, she had never felt any real or genuine love. But this gallant and well-looking Count—this splendid young hero, who seemed to live but for her smiles, who watched for her lightest glance as the devout Persian for the first ray of the morning sun ; her heart could not long resist the fervour of his devotion. Gay, and witty, and fascinating—full of ardour and impatient passion—what a contrast to her stolid husband, who was continually talking, yet never saying anything—who had but one book, his mass-book—who was morose and ignorant, selfish and revengeful—and could only be roused into animation upon matters which affected his own interest or convenience ! Henrietta listened well-pleased to the vows of her passionate gallant, and he, in the joy of successful love, neglected to conceal his admiration from the eyes which it concerned the most. A fracas broke out between the Duke and the Count, and the latter was compelled for awhile to retire from court. But on his return the intimacy (always hazardous, but never criminal) was renewed, the Count obtaining admission to her presence in various disguises.

At length the intrigue became known to the Count's father, the illustrious Maréchal de Grammont. He saw the extent of the danger

into which his son was rushing, and procured from the king the appointment for him of commander of the troops then assembled at Nancy. The impetuous lover declared he would not accept the post, and it was only at the urgent request of Henrietta that he finally consented to obey the royal commands. But he pleaded for a parting interview. How refuse to a lover who suffers for our sake the poor satisfaction of bidding us farewell? The interview was accorded, and the Count de Guiche set out for Nancy.

But the fact of this interview was disclosed by a spy to the Duke, and an *éclaircissement* took place between him and his volatile wife, which resulted in her promise—a promise which she repeated to the king—to break off all correspondence with her lover. She consoled herself during his absence with the flatteries of other courtiers, and with entering heartily into the gaieties of the court. Her husband's fits of jealousy affected her little, as they became more frequent, and she accepted eagerly that homage which all the world was willing to pay to a young, graceful, and lovely woman. Gradually her affection for De Guiche grew weaker. The present flattery was more acceptable than the absent love. De Guiche reproached her with her faithlessness, and she found in his reproaches an admirable excuse for terminating

a connection which wearied her. Then she plunged the more freely into the *espiègleries* of the court, dazzling everywhere, eclipsing the beauties of France with a beauty which seemed French as well as English—French in its *finesse* and gracefulness, English in its freshness and lustre—and acquiring a reputation for her gallantries which has been preserved to posterity in the *Mémoires* of her contemporaries.

In May 1670, Henrietta paid a visit to England. The affection which Charles entertained for her was known to be excessive, and Louis counted upon it as a potent agency in the accomplishment of his designs. He was desirous of persuading Charles to join him in a league offensive and defensive against the Dutch, and employed Henrietta as his ambassador. She succeeded in her mission, for Charles could refuse her nothing ; and, moreover, he wanted money for his pleasures which Louis was very willing to provide. A treaty disgraceful to the honour, and injurious to the best interests, of England was concluded on the 22nd of May 1670. Soon afterwards Henrietta returned to France, the king weeping when he parted with her, and was received at Paris with all the *éclat* that was due to so successful an ambassador. Thus, at the age of twenty-six, she saw herself the connecting link, as it were, between the two greatest kings of the

age. She had in her hands a treaty on which depended the fate of a great part of Europe. The pleasure and consideration which are derived from mingling in state affairs, uniting in her with the fascinations of youth and beauty, gave a singular grace and gentleness to her whole person; and compelled from all that sweet and flattering homage which is given to the woman rather than to her rank.

But while abroad her condition was so brilliant, at home there rankled between her husband and herself an inappeasable strife. Amongst the numerous minions and flatterers of the Duke, the one whom he most esteemed was the Chevalier de Lorraine. He possessed over the weak mind of the prince the influence always enjoyed by a strong one, and employed that influence to increase the hostility between the Duke and Duchess that no rival might dispute his empire with him. Henrietta was not the woman to yield to such an usurpation without a struggle. At that moment enjoying the peculiar favour and patronage of the king, she did not find it difficult to obtain the banishment of the Chevalier, though the Duke, bathed in tears, implored his brother to recall a mandate which reduced him to despair.

The chevalier retired into exile; but left behind him two faithful and daring friends, D'Effiat and De Beuvron, whose fortunes were

inseparably connected with his own, and who were not likely to hesitate at any step which would further his interests and theirs. They perceived that as long as Madame lived, such was her influence with the king, there was no probability of their friend's recall to France ; and they saw that her youth and excellent constitution rendered her death a very distant prospect. In these circumstances it was difficult to be contented ; it seemed easy to be criminal, and they resolved to remove Henrietta from their path. On her return from her successful mission to the English court, the chevalier sent them from Italy—the land of poisoners—a poison both certain and speedy in its effects ; and it only remained for them to find an opportunity of administering it.

We shall now adopt the graphic narrative of Madame de La Fayette, who was not, however, as we shall see, aware of certain particulars recorded by St. Simon for the benefit of posterity.

“On the 24th of June, in the year 1670,” says Madame de La Fayette, “a week after her return from England, Monsieur and Madame went to St. Cloud. The first day that she was there she complained of a pain in her side and chest to which she was subject ; nevertheless, as the weather was extremely warm, she wished to bathe. M. Gueslin, her chief physician, did all he could to alter her

determination ; but, in spite of his remonstrances, she bathed on the Friday, and on the Saturday found herself too ill to repeat the bath. I arrived at St. Cloud on Saturday, at ten o'clock in the evening ; I found her in the gardens. She told me that I should find her looking ill, and that, indeed, she felt so. She had supped at her usual hour, and continued to walk in the moonlight until midnight. On the morrow, Sunday, the 29th of June, she rose early, and descended into Monsieur's apartments, who bathed himself. She remained with him some time, and on leaving his chamber she entered mine, and did me the honour to tell me that she had passed a good night.

“A moment after I went up to her apartments. She told me that she felt chagrined ; but the ill-humour of which she spoke would have been the happiest hours of other women, so great was the natural sweetness of her disposition, and so little was she capable of anger or bad temper.

“As she spoke, her attendants came to announce that mass was ready. She went to hear it, and on returning to her chamber she leaned upon me, and said, with that air of goodness peculiar to her, that she should not be in so bad a humour if she could converse with me ; but that she was so weary of the persons

who surrounded her, as to be unable to endure them any longer.

“ She next repaired to see Mademoiselle (her daughter Maria) sit for her portrait, which was being taken by an admirable English artist, and amused herself by conversing with me and Madame d’Epernon of her voyage to England, and the king her brother.

“ This conversation, which pleased her, restored her cheerfulness. Dinner was served. She ate with her usual appetite, and, after dinner, she fell asleep upon some cushions, as she frequently did when without company. She made me sit near her, so that her head almost reclined upon me.

“ The same English painter was taking Monsieur’s portrait, and while they conversed upon all kinds of topics she continued asleep. During her slumber she changed so considerably, that after having looked at her attentively for some time, I was surprised, and I thought that it must surely be that her mind lent so much lustre to her countenance as to render it agreeable when she was awake, since it was otherwise when she was asleep. I was wrong, nevertheless, to cherish such a thought, for I had frequently seen her when asleep, but had never seen her look less amiable.

“ When she awoke she rose from the place where she had been reclining ; but with so wan

a face (*si mauvais visage*) that Monsieur was surprised, and called my attention to it.

“She now repaired to the *salon*, where she walked for some time with Boisfranc, the Duke’s treasurer, and while speaking with him she frequently complained of the pain in her side.

“Monsieur went downstairs to go to Paris, as he had intended; he met Madame de Meckelbourg upon the stairs, and returned with her: Madame quitted Boisfranc, and joined Madame de Meckelbourg. While she spoke to her, Madame de Gamache brought her a glass of succory water, which she had asked for some time before. Madame de Gourdon, her dressing-woman, presented it to her. She drank its contents, and with one hand replacing the glass upon the salver, she placed the other upon her side, and exclaimed, in a tone which revealed the extremity of suffering, ‘O! how my side pains me! Oh! what agony. I can bear it no longer!’

“She flushed while uttering these words, and, a moment afterwards, grew so lividly pale as to alarm us all. She continued to moan, and bade us help her, for she could no longer sustain herself.

“We supported her under her arms; she walked with difficulty, and with her body bent. We disrobed her in an instant, I supporting



her whilst she was unlaced. She complained without intermission, and I noticed that her eyes were filled with tears. At this I was much moved and astonished, for I knew her to be the most patient person in the world.

“I said to her—kissing the arms which I supported—that she seemed to be suffering sorely; she replied that the pain was inconceivable. We then placed her in bed, and as soon as she laid down, she cried out more than she had previously done, and flung herself from side to side like a person who suffered exceedingly. Her chief physician, Monsieur Esprit, had already been summoned. He came, and said that it was the colic, and ordered the remedies usual for that disease. Meanwhile, the pains were indescribable. Madame said that her illness was more serious than we thought, that she was going to die, that we must send for a confessor.

“Monsieur was standing by her side. She embraced him, and said, with a gentleness and a manner which might have softened the most barbarous hearts, ‘Alas! sir, you do not love me now as you once did, but it is unjust, for I have never failed in my duty to you.’ The Duke appeared strongly moved, and every person in her chamber was so affected that nothing could be heard but the sound of weeping.

" All that I have now related took place in less than half-an-hour. Madame still cried that she felt the most terrible pangs in the pit of her stomach. Suddenly she exclaimed that the water she had drank of was poison ; that perhaps one bottle had been mistaken for another, that she was poisoned, that she could clearly feel it, and that we should give her immediately an antidote.

" I was in the *ruelle* standing near Monsieur ; and although I believed him incapable of such a crime, the astonishment natural at human wickedness caused me to observe him attentively. He was neither shaken nor embarrassed by Madame's assertion. He said that some of the water ought to be given to a dog ; and thought, like Madame, that we ought to seek some oil and a counter-poison to relieve Madame of so horrible a pang. Madame Desbordes, her first woman of the bed-chamber, who was absolute over her, told her that she herself had mixed the water, and drank some of it : but the Duchess persisted in her desire for oil and an antidote, and both were administered. Sainte-Foi, principal valet of the chamber to Monsieur, brought her some viper powder, which she said she would take from his hands, because she had confidence in him. Under the supposition that poison had been given, she was dosed with several drugs, which,

perhaps, were better adapted to injure than relieve her. They made her vomit, as she had done several times before taking any medicine; but the vomits were imperfect, and only removed a little phlegm, and part of the food which she had eaten. The effect of these remedies and the excessive pain she had endured, threw her into a lethargy which appeared to us like repose; but she told us that we must not deceive ourselves, that she had no longer strength to cry, and there could be no remedy for her disease.

" It appeared that she felt convinced of her approaching end, and had made up her mind to it as to something indifferent. According to all appearances, the idea of poison was so firmly fixed in her mind that, perceiving every remedy to be useless, she cared no more for life, and thought only of enduring her pains with patience. We began to feel much apprehension. The Duke bade Madame de Gamache feel her feet, which the physicians had not thought of doing. She came out from the *ruelle* in an agony of terror, and told us that all Madame's limbs were cold. At this we all grew alarmed, and the Duke appeared frightened. Monsieur Esprit asserted that it was an ordinary symptom of colic, and that he would answer for Madame's recovery. The Duke broke out into a passion, and said that

he had answered for Monsieur de Valois, and *he* had died ; and that now he answered for Madame, and that *she* would also die.

“ Meanwhile the curate of Saint Cloud, whom she had sent for, had arrived. The Duke did me the honour to ask if the Duchess would speak to this confessor. I found her very ill. It seemed to me that her pains were not those of an ordinary colic ; but, nevertheless, I was far from foreseeing what would happen, and I attributed the thoughts that entered my mind to the interest I felt in her life.

“ I replied to the Duke that a confession made on the verge of the grave could not fail to be very useful ; and he then ordered me to tell Madame that the curate had arrived. I begged of him to excuse me, and said that as she had asked for him, there could be nothing done but to introduce him into her chamber. Monsieur then drew near her bed, and Madame again asked me for a confessor, but without appearing frightened, and like a person who attended only to those things which were necessary for one in her condition.

“ One of her principal women of the bed-chamber had passed to her pillow to support her ; she would not allow her to withdraw, but confessed before her. After the confessor had retired, the Duke again drew near her bed. She spoke a few words to him in so low a tone that



we could not hear them, but they appeared to be of a tender and submissive character.

“ There had been much discourse relative to bleeding her; but while she wished to be bled in the foot, Monsieur Esprit desired to let blood in the arms. Finally he determined he would do so. The Duke announced the decision to Madame, as a thing to which perhaps she would have some difficulty in making up her mind; but she replied that she willed all that they willed, that every thing was indifferent to her, and that she felt assured that she should not recover. We listened to these words as the effect of a violent agony which she had never before felt, and which made her think herself on the point of death.

“ She had now been ill for upwards of three hours. Gueslin, for whom the Duke had sent a message to Paris, arrived with Monsieur Valot, who had been summoned from Versailles. As soon as Madame saw Gueslin, in whom she had the greatest confidence, she expressed her pleasure at seeing him, declared she was poisoned, and said he must treat her upon that foundation. I do not know whether he believed it, and was convinced that no remedy could be successfully used; or whether he imagined she deceived herself, and that her illness was not dangerous; but he certainly acted either like a man who was without hope, or who saw no peril.

He consulted with Monsieur Valot and with Monsieur Esprit, and after a prolonged conference the three physicians sought the Duke, and assured him, upon their lives, that there was really no danger. Monsieur communicated the good news to Madame ; she told him that she knew her disease better than the physician, and that there was no cure ; but this she said with the same gentle tranquillity, as if she were speaking of an indifferent thing.

“ Monsieur the Prince came to see her ; she told him she should die. All in attendance upon her took up the word to assure him that she was not in such danger ; but she showed an impatience to be gone in order to escape from the agony she was enduring. It appeared, nevertheless, that the bleeding had relieved her. The physicians thought her better ; Monsieur Valot, at half past nine, returned to Versailles ; and we remained around her bed conversing, not thinking her in any peril. We were, indeed, in some measure consoled for the pains which she had suffered, hoping that her illness would conduce to her reconciliation with the Duke. He appeared moved by her condition, and Madame d'Espernon and myself, who had heard all that she had said, took a pleasure in impressing upon his mind the full value of her words.”

After referring to her continual efforts to

vomit, which the physicians in no way endeavoured to assist, Madame de La Fayette continues, "Heaven blinded the physicians, and was unwilling that they should try any remedies capable of retarding a death which it wished to render terrible. She heard us saying she was better, and that we awaited the effect of this potion (a dose of senna) with impatience. 'There is so little chance,' she exclaimed, 'of my growing better, that were I not a Christian I would kill myself, my agony is so intense. I wish it to no one,' she continued, 'but I would that some person could feel for a moment what I suffer, to understand the nature of my pains.'

"When we found that this medicine did not act, we grew disturbed. We summoned Monsieur Esprit and Monsieur Gueslin. They told us that we must wait a little longer; she rejoined that if they suffered as she suffered, they would not wait so calmly. Two entire hours were spent in waiting for this remedy to act, and these were the last in which she could have received any assistance. She had taken a quantity of medicine; her bed had become uneasy; and we made her up a small one in the *ruelle*, into which she moved without help. As soon as she was in the little bed, we perceive that, whether she was really dying, or whether we could see her more clearly because

the tapers had been brought near her face, she appeared much worse. The doctors wishing to examine her closely, a light had been procured ; she had hitherto, since the breaking out of her illness, insisted upon their being moved to a distance.

“The Duke asked her if she was inconvenienced by it : ‘Ah, no, sir,’ she replied, ‘nothing can disturb me more ; I shall not be alive to-morrow morning as you will see.’ Some broth was given her, because she had taken no refreshment since her dinner ; as soon as she had swallowed it, her pains increased, and became as violent as when she had drank her glass of succory water. Death showed itself in her countenance, but notwithstanding her cruel sufferings, she did not appear agitated.

“The king had sent several times to make enquiries, and she had commanded him to be informed that she was dying. Those who had seen her told him that she was seriously ill ; and Monsieur de Créqui, who had passed through Saint Cloud on his way to Versailles, declared that she was in great danger. Louis, therefore, was anxious to see her, and arrived at Saint Cloud at eleven o’clock.

“When he arrived, Madame was in that access of agony which the broth had occasioned. It seemed as if his presence enlightened the physicians, for when he took them aside to



gather their opinions, those very men who two hours before had answered for her life, and had found the coldness of her limbs only a symptom of colic, began declaring that there was no hope—that this coldness and the weakness of her pulse were signs of mortification, and that it was time she received the holy sacrament.

“The queen and the Countess de Soissons had accompanied the king; Madame de La Vallière and Madame de Montespan were also present. I was speaking to them when the Duke called me, and told me, weeping, what the physicians had just said. I was necessarily surprised at this and much affected, and I replied to the Duke that they had lost their senses, and knew not what to think either as to her living or her salvation; that she had only spoken for a quarter of an hour to the curate of Saint Cloud, and that some priest ought to be sent for. The Duke told me that he had already sent for Monsieur de Condom [better known as the famous Bossuet.] I thought that he could have made no better choice, but that while waiting Monsieur de Condom’s arrival, it would be well to summon Monsieur Feuillet, the canon, whose merits are well known.

“Meanwhile the king sat at Madame’s bedside. She told him that he was about to lose the most faithful servant he had ever

had. He replied that she was not in such great danger, but that he was astonished at, and admired, her courage. To this she rejoined that he well knew she had never been afraid of death, but had feared to lose his royal favour.

“Then after the king had spoken to her of God, he returned to the place where the physicians had assembled. He found me in great despair, because they would give her no more remedies, and especially an emetic. He honoured me by saying that they were evidently at a loss ; that they knew not what they were now doing ; and that he would attempt to recall them to their senses. He spoke to them, and approaching Madame’s bedside, told her that he was no physician, but that he had just proposed thirty remedies to the doctors, and they had replied ‘we must wait.’ She began to speak, and said, she must die according to their forms.

“The king perceiving that according to all appearances there was no longer any hope, bade her farewell with many tears. She implored him not to weep, because it overcame her, and said that the first news he would receive on the morrow would be that of her death.

“The Marshal de Grammont approached her bed. She told him he would lose a good friend, that she was about to die, and that



at first she had conceived herself poisoned by mistake.

“ As soon as the king had retired, I placed myself by her side. She said to me, ‘ Madame de La Fayette, my nose has already shrunk (*mon nez s'est déjà retiré*)’. I could only reply with tears; for what she told me was true, but I had not before taken notice of it. We afterwards replaced her in the great bed; the hic-cough seized her. She said to Monsieur Esprit that it was ‘the death-rattle.’ Several times she had asked when she should die; she now repeated the question; and although he replied to her as to a person who was not nigh her end, it might clearly be seen that she had no longer any hope.

“ She never directed her thoughts for one moment towards life; never uttered a reflection upon the cruelty of the fate which carried her off in the flower of her beauty, put not a question to the physicians upon the possibility of saving her, showed no eagerness for their remedies, much as the violence of her pains must have made her desire them, preserving a tranquil countenance in the midst of her certain knowledge of approaching death, of her thoughts of poison, and of sufferings which were cruel; in a word, she displayed an unparalleled courage, which I know not how adequately to describe.

"The king had gone, and the physicians declared the case was hopeless. Monsieur Feuillet came; he spoke to the Duchess with grave austerity; but he found her in a frame of mind which went as far as his austerity. She had some scruple that her past confessions were as nothing, and besought Monsieur Feuillet to assist her in making a general one. This she did, with the highest sentiments of piety, and with earnest resolves to live like a Christian if God should restore her to health.

"I drew near her bed after her confession; Monsieur Feuillet was by her side, and a Capucin monk, her ordinary confessor. This good father wished to speak to her, and kept involving her in a discourse which fatigued her. She looked at me with eyes which expressed her thoughts, and then, turning them upon the Capucin, said, with the utmost gentleness, as if she feared to wound him, "Let Monsieur Feuillet speak, my father; you shall speak in your turn."

"At this moment arrived the English ambassador (Montagu). Immediately she saw him, she spoke to him of her brother, King Charles, and of the grief with which her death would afflict him. She had previously spoken of him several times since the commencement of her illness. She begged the ambassador to tell him that he had lost the one person in the

world who loved him best ; and when he enquired of her whether she was poisoned, I do not know if she replied in the affirmative ; but I know she charged him to deny it to King Charles, and to spare him that great pain. She also said that her brother must not think of avenging her, for as the king was not guilty of it, he must not make him answerable.

“ All these things she spoke in English, but as the word *poison* is the same in both languages, Monsieur Feuillet heard it, and interrupting the conversation, charged her to sacrifice her life to God, and to busy herself with no other matters.

“ She received the Lord’s Supper. Afterwards, the Duke having retired, she enquired whether she should see him no more. They went in search of him. He came, and embraced her, weeping : she begged him to withdraw, saying that he overcame her.

“ Meanwhile, she gradually grew weaker, and from time to time her heart was affected with feeble pulsation. Monsieur Brager, an excellent physician, arrived. He did not despair of her condition at first ; he wished to consult with the other doctors. Madame caused them to be summoned ; they requested her to leave them a short time together ; but she again sent in search of them, and they approached her bed. They had spoken of bleed-

ing her in the foot. 'If you wish to do so,' she remarked, 'there is no time to lose—my head grows confused—and my stomach swells.'

"They were surprised at so great a courage, and seeing that she continued to wish it, they bled her; but no blood flowed, and very little had run when they first made the attempt. She thought she was dying while her foot was in the water, and the doctors said they would go and make up a restorative. She replied that she wished for the extreme unction before she took anything else.

"While she was receiving it, Monsieur de Condom arrived. He spoke to her of God in language suited to her condition, and with that eloquence and devoutness which characterized all his discourse. He caused her to do what he considered necessary, and she entered into all that he said with admirable zeal and presence of mind.

"As he spoke, her principal woman of the chamber approached her, to hand her something which she was in want of. She spoke to her in English, so that Monsieur de Condom could not understand her, preserving to the last her natural politeness: 'Give Monsieur de Condom, when I am dead, the emerald which I have had set for him.'

"As he continued to speak to her of God, she was seized with a longing for sleep, which

was in effect, the failure of her physical powers. She asked him whether she might indulge in a few moments of repose ; he bade her do so, and that he would go and pray God in her behalf.

“ Monsieur Feuillet remained at the foot of the bed, but almost at the same minute, Madame required him to call Monsieur de Condom, for she felt she was on the point of death. Monsieur de Condom returned to her side, and gave her the crucifix ; she took it, and embraced it with ardour. He continued his exhortations, and she replied with as much clearness as if she had not been ill, keeping the crucifix pressed to her lips ; death alone could loosen her grasp of it. Her strength failed her ; she fell back ; and lost speech and life altogether. Her agony endured but a moment, and after two or three convulsive movements of the mouth, she expired—at half-past two in the morning, and nine hours from the time when she was first seized with illness.”

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The sudden death of this young and beautiful lady produced a lively sensation both in France and England, and a very general suspicion was entertained that her end had been caused by poison. Her brother, King Charles, appears to have shared this suspicion. When Sir Thomas Armstrong related to him the sad

narrative of his sister's last hours, he exclaimed in a passion of weeping. "The Duke is a . . . ! But, prithee, Tom, don't speak of it." Sir William Temple was sent into France to enquire into the birth of the rumour, and, as the result of his researches, declared that there was more in it than was fit to be known, but that it was best for the king to push his enquiries no further unless prepared to act as became a great sovereign. He thought also that it might tend to the disadvantage of the deceased Princess's daughters. On the other hand, the Duke of York, did not accept the general belief. "It was suspected," he says, in his memoirs, "that counter-poisons were given to her; but when she was opened, in the presence of the English ambassador, the Earl of Ailesbury, and an English physician and surgeon, there appeared no ground of suspicion of any foul play." Bishop Burnet, however, declares that the stomach was wholly ulcerated. Louis himself would seem to have entertained great suspicions. At first he refused to receive a letter sent to him by the Duke his brother, but subsequently, upon making a further investigation, he declared himself persuaded of the Duke's innocence. Montagu, the English ambassador, as appears from his letters to Lord Arlington, was convinced that the Princess had been foully used, and he plainly hints at

the Chevalier de Lorraine as the agent in her murder. The revelations of the Duke de Saint Simon seem to us to set the question at rest, and to completely establish the fact of her having perished by poison.

After relating that the Chevalier had forwarded a sure and speedy poison to his accomplices, D'Effiat and De Beuvron, he continues:—

“Madame was at Saint Cloud, and for some time had been in the habit of taking as a refreshment a glass of succory water. A page of her chamber had the task of mixing it. She placed it in a closet in one of Madame's anti-chambers, with her glass, &c. This succory water was kept in a jar of china or porcelain, and there was always near it some common water, in case Madame found the succory too bitter, and wished to weaken it. This anti-chamber was the public passage to Madame's rooms, and no one ever stayed in it.

“All this D'Effiat had note of. On the 29th of June 1670, passing through this anti-chamber, he found the opportunity he wanted: no one was there, and he had remarked that he was not followed by any person who wanted to see the Duchess. He turned back, went to the closet, opened it, and threw in the poison; then, hearing some one approaching, armed himself with another jug of ordinary water,

and as he was setting it down, the page of the chamber, who had the care of the succory, cried out, ran up to him, and enquired of him sharply what he was doing in the closet. D'Effiat without manifesting the least embarrassment, replied that he begged his pardon, but feeling thirsty and knowing some water was kept there, (showing him the jug of ordinary water,) he had been unable to refrain from drinking. The boy continued to grumble, and the other, appeasing him and making excuses, entered into Madame's apartment, and begun conversing like the other courtiers without the least emotion. What happened an hour afterwards is not my business, and made only too much noise throughout Europe.

“ Madame having died on Monday, the 30th of June, at three o'clock in the morning, the king was penetrated with the greatest grief. Apparently, during the day, there were some signs that the page of the chamber had not held his peace, and he formed an idea that Surmon, Madame's head-steward, was in the secret, from the intimate confidence which prevailed between him, in his low condition, and Monsieur d'Effiat. The king had gone to bed ; he rose, sent for Brissac, who was then in his body-guard and close at hand, and commanded him to choose six *gardes du corps*, men whom he could trust, to carry off the steward, and

bring him by the backway into his cabinet. This was done before morning. When the king perceived it, he bade Brissac and his first valet of the chamber retire; and assuming a countenance and a tone of voice to strike the greatest terror, 'My friend,' he said, looking at him from head to foot, 'listen to me attentively; if you confess everything, and answer me truly in all that I wish to know from you, I will pardon you, whatever you may have done, and there shall be no further mention of it. But, beware that you do not conceal from me the least thing: for if you do, you are a dead man before you quit this place. Was not Madame poisoned?' 'Yes, sire,' replied the steward. 'Who poisoned her?' said the king, 'and how was it done?' He replied that the Chevalier de Lorraine sent the poison to Beuvron and D'Effiat; and related to him the particulars which I have already recorded. Then the king, repeating his promise of pardon and menaces of death, exclaimed, 'And knew my brother of the crime?' 'No, sire; not one of us was mad enough to speak of it to him, it is no secret that he would have slain us all!' At this answer, the king heaved a great 'ah!' like a man oppressed in the chest, who gives a sudden breath. 'That is all,' he cried, 'which I wish to know. 'But are you sure of this?' He then

recalled Brissac, and bade him lead the man away to some place where he might immediately be set at liberty. It was this man himself who related the incident, long years afterwards, to Monsieur Joly de Fleury, the Procureur-Général of the Parliament, from whom I heard this anecdote."

Whether the Duke, who was jealous of Henrietta's gallantries, and writhed with that miserable envy which a weak mind always cherishes towards a strong one, had no share in her cruel murder, may reasonably be doubted. At all events, the Chevalier de Lorraine was permitted to return to court immediately, and to serve in the army as adjutant-general (*maréchal de camp*) ; nor did the Duke show any disgust at the presence of his wife's suspected murderer.

Henrietta had three children by the Duke :— Philip, who died young ; Maria, afterwards married to Charles II. King of Spain ; and Anna Maria, who became the wife of Victor Amadeus II., Duke of Savoy, and subsequently Duke of Sicily and Sardinia. " This latter Princess," remarks Mr. Jesse, " was great grandmother of Louis XVI., who was beheaded in 1793, that unfortunate monarch having been the sixth in generation from Charles I. of England." If a Nemesis attended the house

of Bourbon, it was assuredly provoked by the crimes of which its members had been guilty.

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*Authorities* :—Earl of Arlington's Letters ; Macpherson's Original Papers ; Burnet's History of His Own Time ; Sir John Reresby's Memoirs ; Court of Charles I. ; Mémoires sur la Cour de Louis XIV ; Henrietta D'Orléans, par Madame La Fayette ; Mémoires de Duc de St. Simon ; Voltaire, Siècle de Louis XIV ; Mrs. Everett Green's Princesses of England ; Miss Strickland's Queens of England, &c.



## MADAME DE MAINTENON.

A.D. 1635—1719.



## MADAME DE MAINTENON.

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WE are about to sketch the career of a remarkable woman—remarkable even in France, which is the land of heroines rather than of heroes—a woman impossible in England, where vice has often been triumphant but never respectable—a woman who was not virtuous, and yet had all the credit of virtue—who was devout, and yet not religious—sensible, but often swayed by prejudice—cold, and yet liable to gusts of passion—a woman who born in a prison, died in a palace, and from the widow of a cripple became the wife of a king! Few lives have presented greater contrasts of light and shade; few have had in them more of the elements of romance without being romantic. Few women in life made fewer friendships, or while amusing the curiosity have less secured the respect of posterity. Madame de Maintenon, for it is of her we shall speak, lived a

history of surprising and exciting changes ; a history which in most cases would have excited the imagination of the poet and won the sympathies of the many ; and yet, because she who worked it out was incapable of generosity, and if she sinned, sinned upon calculation—it has never received the attention that it really deserves. A popular interest surrounds Nell Gwynne with a magical halo. Poets and romancists have embroidered their pleasant fancies upon the stories of Agnes Sorel and the fair de La Vallière, but who has had for the astute “widow Scarron” a throb of admiration or an impulse of tender feeling ? We wonder at her rise ; we do not sympathize with it ; I am not sure but that we should rejoice in all decency if the intriguing, demure, cold, passionless, and jesuitical woman met with an occasional misfortune. So ready is the world to respond to generosity, that it pardons as errors in the ardent what it condemns as vices in the respectable.

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*Frances d'Aubigné* or *d'Aubigny*, so well known to—and, as we have hinted, so little loved by—posterity, and her own time, as *Madame de Maintenon*, sprung of a family which was noble in its origin, and which had been illustrated in the old time by some illustrious names. Of these the most memorable

was Theodore Agrippa d'Aubigné, famous for his calvinistic zeal, his devotion for Henry IV., his exalted character and his writings. He fought gallantly for Henri Quatre, and considered himself, therefore, at liberty to advise him freely. Henri preferred service to counsel, but though he was often offended with d'Aubigné's boldness, he remembered that it was displayed in the field as well as in the council chamber. He enjoyed the king's esteem, if not his favour, until the dagger of Ravaillac deprived France of the most patriotic of her sovereigns. He then retired to Genoa; wielded the pen as boldly as he had done the sword; and died, full of years and honour, in 1630.

His son, Constant d'Aubigné, had nothing but his name in common with his father. That father has left to posterity the following portrait of his son:—

“As God does not attach his favour to flesh or blood, my eldest son does not resemble his father, although I took every possible care with his education. I had him brought up with as much vigilance and at as great an expense as if he had been a prince; but this wretch, becoming first addicted to play and drunkenness at Sedan, where I had sent him to the academies, and afterwards growing disgusted with study, finished by wholly ruining

himself among courtesans in the *cabarets* of Holland. Subsequently, on his return to France, he married without my consent a poor unfortunate whom he afterwards killed. Wishing to draw him away from court, where he continued his debauchery, I got him the command of a regiment in the war of the Prince de Condé, which I had levied at my own expense: but nothing could arrest nor satisfy the irregular passions of that volatile, libertine, and audacious spirit. He returned to court, where he lost at play twenty times more than he was worth, so that, finding himself without resources, he abjured his religion and embraced the Roman creed, of which, however, he made no public profession lest I should disinherit him. Then he repaired to Poitou, with the design of robbing one of my two towns of Maillezais and Doignon. As I knew nothing of his wicked intention, I made him my lieutenant in Maillezais, with full power to command it in my absence, and retired, myself to Doignon.

“Through this fine arrangement, the town of Maillezais soon became a public gaming-house, a rendezvous for women of loose lives, and a mart for false coiners. More: this worthy commandant, to make his court to the king, boasted in his letters, that all the soldiers in the garrison were more at his disposal than at mine. I was not long in ignorance of these things, which

compelled me soon to have recourse to a remedy. For this purpose, I put myself into a large boat, with a number of trusty soldiers, some petards and shells, and having approached, under cover of the night, the walls of Maillezais, I advanced alone, and in disguise, to gain the gate of the citadel. The sentinel, having discovered me, prepared to oppose me; but I did not give him the time, for leaping on his neck and flashing before his eyes a dagger, which kept him silent, I made myself master of the said gate; I let my men through it into the citadel, and I expelled those of my son whom I thought most attached to him. My unworthy son, seeing himself thus dislodged from his hole, retired to Niort, to the company of the Baron de Neuillant, who, like him, had rebelled against his father."

D'Aubigné was soon constrained to make against his son a second expedition, "all fever-sick as he was." Still later, Constant d'Aubigné, by pretending to return to the Reformed Religion, obtained his father's pardon and the confidence of his party, passed over into England, was admitted into the councils of the English ministers, learned their determination to send assistance to Rochelle, then returned to Paris, and sold the secret to the French Government. The aged Agrippa, in despair, disinherited and cursed his son. Con-

stant d'Aubigné, as the reward of his service, became equerry of the king, and gentleman of the chamber, and received the barony of Surineau, which had been confiscated from his father. He profited by these favours of fortune to marry a second time. All her blessings fell upon him at once in recompense of an infamous action.

But this prosperity soon decayed. His perfidies had enriched and exalted him ; his irregularities of life destroyed him. Beholding himself on the verge of ruin, he desired to provide for his wife's support. With this object in view, he re-opened communications with the English Government ; but his treason coming to light, he was imprisoned in the Château Trompette at Bordeaux, from whence he was removed, at his own request, to Niort. His wife, a woman respectable for her virtue, devotion and misfortunes, was not separated from him ; and it was in the prison-house of Niort that she gave birth, on the 27th of November, 1635, to her third child, François d'Aubigné, who was destined to become Madame de Maintenon, and to marry Louis XIV. She was born in 1635, when Charles I. sat on the throne of England as an absolute king ; she died 1719, four years after the abortive attempt of his grandson to reclaim that throne from George I. In that period of four score years and four what great events were crowded—

what strange vicissitudes experienced by kings and nations ! The rise, climax, and decay of the glory of *le grand Monarque* ; the struggle of the civil war in England, and the banishment of its Stuart sovereigns ; the gradual advance of England to a paramount position among the Powers of Europe ; the decline of her rival, Holland, and the degradation of her enemy, Spain. A period illustrated by Milton, and Dryden, and Pope ; by Bossuet, Voltaire, and Racine ; by Turenne, Villars, Boufflers, and Marlborough ; by Cromwell, and Mazarin, and Olivarez—a period of great men and great deeds ! But if the task of the historian, who records the events of that period and the achievements of its heroes is at once more splendid and more arduous, scarcely less instructive is the work of him who treats of its social influences, and portrays the career of those who, less visibly but not less powerfully than warriors and statesmen, controlled the progress of nations and swayed the destinies of men. Thus, if the poet finds material worthy of his muse in the life of a Marlborough, a Cromwell, or a Colbert, there is much that is valuable and interesting for an humbler pen in the career of the favourites of courts and the leaders of society. In this spirit we return to our narrative of the life of Frances d'Aubigné.

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If, as biographers relate, the d'Aubigné family endured great privations in their prison at Niort, the prison-born infant was not stinted in the baptismal accessories of godfather and godmother. The former was the Count Francis de La Rochefoucauld, and the latter Suzanne de Baudéan, daughter of the Baron de Neuillant, who subsequently became the Maréchale de Novailles. But this aristocratic patronage brought no relief to the misery endured by the Aubignés—scanty clothing, a straw pallet on the stone floor, and scarce food enough to ward off starvation. They were in this wretched condition when a sister of Constant d'Aubigné, named Madame de Villette, heard of their sufferings, and hastened to brighten their dark and dreary lot. She removed his three children, including the prison-born, to her Château at Mencay, tended them affectionately, and recruited their failing energies. The mother then claimed her youngest, and removed with her husband to his first prison in the Château Trompette. Here a little incident showed the influence of aristocratic kinship. One day the youthful Frances was playing with the gaoler's daughter, and the latter exclaimed,

“I have a pocketful of money, and you are too poor to have any.”

“It is true,” replied the child, “but I am a lady, and you are not.”

Through the exertions of his devoted wife, D'Aubigné was at length released, and set out to seek a new fortune in the golden lands of the unknown West. He fixed upon Martinico. The voyage thither was not without its perils. The infant Frances was seized with a dangerous illness; she was thought to be dead, and but for the loving obstinacy of her mother, would have been cast into the sea. Shortly afterwards their ship narrowly escaped capture by a pirate. We may finish these anecdotes of her infancy with another, which she often related when she had risen to the rule of France; how that, one day at Martinico, being in the fields, partaking of some milk with her mother, a huge serpent came towards them. They not did wait for it, however, but fled away swiftly, and left each her share of milk for the serpent to swallow.

She was relating these incidents of her early life, on one occasion, at Versailles. "Madame," exclaimed the Bishop of Metz, "it is not worth while to go back so far for so little (*on ne revient pas de si loin pour peu de chose*)."<sup>1</sup> We record the anecdote for the sake of the commentary.

The latter days of Constant d'Aubigné were not better or brighter than his earlier ones. The success he gained by his talents was neutralized by his vices. He lost at the gaming table all he had acquired by agriculture,

and commerce, and spent his closing years most miserably in a small military office whose proceeds scarcely supported his family. After his death, Madame d'Aubigné returned to France with her two children, (she had lost one). This was in 1644 or 1645.

She found herself plunged at once into law-suits to recover the inheritance of those children—some estates bequeathed to them by their grandfather Agrippa. Her labours and her sufferings were so great, that she was glad to place her Frances once again with Madame de Villette. But while Madame d'Aubigné was a Catholic, her sister clung with earnest fidelity to the religion of their father, and began to educate her niece in the principles of the Protestant faith. The seed took root, and rapidly blossomed. The mother soon perceived that on religious questions her daughter entertained very decided opinions, and that at the age of twelve she reasoned like a casuist. One day she wished to take her to hear mass. Frances refused. The mother insisted.

“ You do not then love me ? ” said she.

“ I love my God much more,” was the rejoinder.

She was taken to church, but committed there such acts of open irreverence, that her mother, enraged, gave her a blow in the face.

Immediately presenting her other cheek, she said,

“Strike! It is good to suffer for one’s religion.”

Madame d’Aubigné now thought it was time to reclaim her daughter from so dangerous a custodian, but was obliged to obtain an order from the Court before her aunt would surrender so hopeful a proselyte. She then attempted to win her back to the bosom of orthodoxy, but found it no easy task. Frances disputed with everybody, not excepting even the curate of the village, to whom she said, one day, when she found herself at the bottom of all her arguments :

“ You know more than I do ; but here is a book (the Bible), which knows more than *you* do. This book does not say what you say, and it is for this reason you are unwilling I should read it.”

The godmother, Madame de Neuillant, at length grew irritated at this sturdy conscientiousness. “ It is too common an error,” says Monsieur Héquet, “ to think that authority can supply the place of argument, and punishment of persuasion.” Harshness was substituted for mildness in her dealings with her charge. Frances was placed with the servants, and entrusted with the meanest duties of the household. “ I ruled in the kitchen,” she said, after-

wards, "it was there my sovereignty begun." Every morning, with a veil over her face to preserve her complexion, a straw hat on her head, a basket on her arm, a switch in her hand, she went to look after the domestic fowl, with strict orders not to touch the basket that contained her breakfast, until she had learned five quatrains of Pibrac's.

She was rescued from these humiliations by Love. A young peasant hazarded a declaration, and Madame de Neuillant hurried off her niece to the shelter of the Convent of the Ursulines, at Niort. Here, after awhile, she succumbed to the *genius loci*, and abjured the Protestant faith. The nuns having secured her soul, thought they had done their duty, and as Madame de Neuillant paid nothing for her board, they intimated that she must recall her niece. Both the niece and the aunt now set out for Paris, where Madame d'Aubigné, in poverty and humiliation, but still with a dauntless perseverance, was prosecuting her suit for the recovery of her husband's inheritance. She was at length compelled, from want of means, to consent to an unsatisfactory compromise.

The beautiful convert, Françoise d'Aubigné, had, meanwhile, received her first communion, and been ushered into society under the auspices of her aunt. She entered it at a happy moment. France, no longer distracted by in-



ternal commotions, and ruled by the inflexible sway of a man of unwavering purpose, was beginning to cultivate with ardour the pursuit of art and letters. Wit was assuming in society an equal place with wealth, and rank, and power. Richelieu loved to surround himself with men of talent, and himself attempted to mingle with his laurels the bays of Apollo. One man there was who, above all others, succeeded in attracting the company of humourists, poets, and philosophers, and in establishing a Literary Society, which influenced the thought, morals, and manners of the age. This was the celebrated Scarron.

His father was a counsellor, who had married a second time. The new wife hated the son of the first marriage, and Scarron accordingly quitted his paternal roof, studied, travelled, and assumed the clerical tonsure, though unsuited by the vivacity of his disposition and the freedom of his genius for the cure of souls. Having formed an acquaintance with several bold young wits and daring roués, he ventured in the carnival of 1638 upon an excess, which brought with it a life-long punishment. He disguised himself as a savage; was pursued by an indignant mob; and, to save his life, took refuge in a swamp, where, for some hours, he lay concealed. The exposure smote him with a terrible chill, which penetrated every bone, and

afflicted him, at the age of twenty-seven, with an incurable combination of palsy, sciatica, and rheumatism. In his own own lively language he describes its effects :—

“ My person,” he says, “ was once well-made, though I was short : but my malady has reduced its standard by at least twelve inches more. My head is too broad for my figure ; my face so full as to make my body seem thin ; I have hair enough not to need a wig ; and, in spite of the proverb, there are many white hairs amongst it. My teeth, formerly square pearls, are now of the colour of wood, and will soon resemble slate. My legs and thighs first formed an obtuse angle—then an equilateral—and now an acute one. My thighs and body make another ; and my head always inclining towards my breast, I become no ill representation of the letter Z. My arms are contracted as well as my legs, and my fingers as my arms ; so that I am, in a word, an epitome and abridgment of human miseries.”

He pourtrayed himself in lively verse with easy indifference to his afflictions :—

“ Je ne regarde plus qu'en bas,  
Je suis torticolis, j'ai la tête penchante ;  
Ma mine devient si plaisante  
Que quand on en riroit, je ne m'en plaindrois pas.”

At his residence in the Faubourg Saint

Germain, this good-tempered humourist, whose liveliness nothing could deaden, and whose pen found constant exercise in ridiculing everything and everybody, assembled a glorious company of wits and poets, philosophers and dramatists, men and women famous for their talent, powers of conversation, good looks, or good manners—Ségrais, Ménage, Scudéry, Benserade, the Count de Grammont, Bautru, Servien, de Villarnaux, and others. Women, indeed, went thither less frequently; for they could scarcely pardon even Scarron's genius the freedom with which he discoursed on themes that are not usually the subject for social discussion. But there were occasions when, for the sake of the charm they lent to his réunions, the wit endeavoured to restrain his unlicensed tongue; and then his *salons* would be thronged with the beauties and *femmes d'esprit* of Paris.

Thither, one memorable day, went Madame and Mademoiselle d'Aubigné, escorted by Madame de Neuillant. It was for Frances the first step to a throne. Dressed in a robe fashioned by a country modiste, she found herself in the midst of elegantly-attired ladies, and discovered that her gown was, at least, an inch too short. What greater misfortune could befall a young Frenchwoman? First she blushed, and then she wept. The good-natured cripple

marked her distress, and endeavoured to console her.

Shortly after this interview, Madame d'Aubigné died, and her daughter, at the age of fifteen, found herself alone in the world. How she continued to support herself in this unhappy position, none of her biographers explain, and a period of three months in her career remains in total obscurity. The most reasonable hypothesis is, that she was still under the protection of her aunt. From the following letter, which she addressed to a friend she had known at Paris, Mademoiselle de Saint-Hermant, it is evident that she occasionally went into society, and met the famous "professor of deportment" and teacher of "refined manners," the Chevalier de Mère. Thus runs the letter:—

"At Niort, 1650.

" Mademoiselle,

" You write to me things much too flattering, and you treat me, little as I deserve it, as if I were of a sex different to your own. I am far more flattered by your praises, then by those of Monsieur de Mère. He gives them with more passion, but with less tenderness; so that I should mistrust a lover who knew how to gain my heart, with so much address as you do. I shall not regret my absence from Paris, if you are not there. You efface the remembrance of



all I suffered in that city. I shall never forget the tears which you have shed with me, and as often as I think of it, I shed them again. I seat myself with a pleasure constantly renewed upon the chair, which you have worked for me with your own hands; and when I wish to write, I can neither satisfy myself with my expressions, nor my thoughts, if I do not make use of your pens and paper. I pray you, mademoiselle, to excuse me from sending to you all I write. I have neither sufficient courage, nor sufficient talent for that. I promise you one half; you shall have the remainder when I have as much wit as Monsieur Scarron. I like Mademoiselle de Neuillant sincerely; I beg of you to tell her so, and to thank her for the service she rendered me, in giving me in you a friend who can console me, if anything can, for the loss of my mother."

To us this letter seems exceedingly artificial; seems the polished production of a cold heart, and a cool brain. Even in the depth of her sorrow for a mother's death, the letter writer balances phrases with all the nicety of a rhetorician, and turns her periods with the skill of a practised orator. But Scarron, to whom Mademoiselle de Saint-Hermant showed it, as doubtlessly she was intended to do, was enraptured with the elegance of the composition. In his turn he

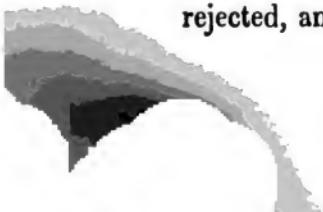
addressed to Mademoiselle d'Aubigné the following letter :—

“ Mademoiselle,

“ I had always very much doubted if that little girl, whom, some six months ago, I saw enter my room with a gown too short, and who began to weep, I hardly know why, was as refined as she looked, (*aussi spirituelle qu'elle en avait la mine*). The letter which you have written to Mademoiselle de Saint-Hermant is so full of wit, that I am discontented with my own for not having taught me to recognise all the merit of yours. To speak the truth, I should never have believed that in the American isles, or among the nuns of Niort, one learned to write such beautiful letters ; and I cannot well imagine why you have taken as much trouble to conceal your talents, as everybody else does to display them. Now that you are discovered, you ought to make no more difficulty in writing to me, than to Mademoiselle de Saint-Hermant. I will do all I can to write as good a letter as you ; and you will have the pleasure of seeing that much is wanting to render me your equal in capacity. Such as I am, I shall be, all my life,

Yours, &c.

Scarron's proposal was too flattering to be rejected, and of the epistolary contest which fol-



lowed there remain numerous memorials, but unfortunately they are those of Scarron. The letters of the fair d'Aubigné have perished ; and we have no means of ascertaining why the witty cripple who began his correspondence in a light and easy tone, content to do his part in an interchange of intellectual exercises, gradually converted it into something more serious and earnest ; and from writing like a wit, ended in writing like a lover ! A man so versed in the world as Scarron, so conscious of his physical imperfections, so keenly sensible of the ridiculous, would hardly have exposed himself to the risk of an ignominious rebuff—would hardly have dared to think of love, if he had received no encouragement. Let the reader peruse the following letter.

“ You are then ill of a tertian fever ; if it turns to a quartan, we shall have it all the winter ; for you will not doubt but that it will afflict me, as badly as it will yourself. Let me know, I pray you, how many attacks we have already had, and what the physicians say of it, since you see them first ; and, indeed, it is an extraordinary thing that you know my news four or five days before I do. I trust much to my strength, overwhelmed as I am with so many evils, in taking so great a share of yours. I do not know if I should not have done better to have instructed you the first time that I saw you. I

ought to have done so, to judge by the event. But what likelihood was there that a young girl could trouble the mind of an old man? And who would ever have suspected her of doing me enough harm to make me regret that I am no longer in a condition to revenge myself?

“Compliments apart, I know that you are ill, and I do not know whether as much care is being taken of you as is necessary. This anxiety much increases the uneasiness I do feel in seeing you as unfortunate, as I am useless to you. But how I love you! And yet it is folly to love so much! Now, at every moment I am seized with a desire to visit Poitou, even in this severe weather! Is it not a madness? Ah, return, return, since I am foolish enough to regret my absent beauties. I ought to know myself better, and to consider whether it is not enough to be crippled from head to foot, without the further affliction of an impatience to see you. It is a cursed malady. Do I not perceive how it has attacked poor Mère, since he does not see you as often as he wishes, although he sees you every day? He writes to us in despair, and I wager you that he is an *âme damnée* at this very moment, not because he is a heretic, but because he loves you. You ought, however, to be satisfied with your conquests, to leave the human race in peace, and—

“ ‘To command those eyes that slay  
To rest contented with their prey.’ ”

If it is difficult to understand how Scarron could adopt this amorous tone, it is not difficult to understand why Mademoiselle d'Aubigné did not resent—perhaps encouraged it. She was a woman of a cold and calculating disposition; ambitious of power and influence; and ill-disposed to pass the summer of her days in obscurity and shadow. Her aunt treated her with the harshest severity; and granted her, with a grudging hand, barely sufficient help to enable her to live. She saw that, as the wife of Scarron, she could mix with the greatest wits of France, and she had sufficient confidence in the resources of her coolness, her sagacity, and her address, to believe in a brilliant future, if she once secured a *point d'appui*. Scarron was a cripple, paralytic, and deformed; was loose in his morals, and filthy in his talk. For his physical weakness she cared little: his moral deficiencies she hoped to correct. His abilities she appreciated; his sense of honour and his generous heart she respected. A pauper, dependant upon the bounty of Madame de Neuillant, there was no alternative for her but the convent unless she secured a husband, and her devotion was never sufficiently ardent to oppose any insurmountable obstacle to her ambition.

After a short expatriation, Mademoiselle

d'Aubigné returned to Paris, and her re-appearance produced a lively sensation. Her regular and noble features, the purity of her complexion, the elegance of her figure, the mingled grace and dignity of her bearing, the marked distinction of her manners, and force of her language, her wit, her judgment, and the singular prudence of her conduct, were advantages not likely to be overlooked or underrated by the Parisian world. The romance attaching to her early years heightened the effect produced by her appearance. She was called "The Beautiful Indian," and she did not show herself solicitous to rectify the error into which society had fallen. It is no misfortune in Paris to acquire a romantic appellation, or to boast of antecedents which differ from those of everybody else.

But if her position was, in some respects, splendid, it was neither without its trials nor its temptations. Who can say to what offensive insinuations her poverty exposed her? Scarron alone showed her a delicate sympathy, a sincere and disinterested friendship; Scarron alone proved that he respected her. Still, her natural feelings as a woman made her hesitate to accept a husband, who would only be a husband in name. We find the wit addressing her in language that refers to her indecision. "*Quel diable allais-je faire dans cette galère?* Why



do I love you—you who will never love me? You continually say to me, with that gaiety which throws me into despair, ‘ You love me because I am pretty ; I do not love you, because you are frightful.’

“ ‘ Reason in vain would make me understand  
The peril which I dare ;  
Those eyes which seem so mild, that graceful hair,  
That rosy mouth, that skin of delicate hue,  
Beautiful Iris, miracle most rare,  
I swear to die for you ! ’ ”

At this juncture, the illness of Madame de Neuillant occurred to force upon her a prompt decision, for she could not but ask herself how she would go forth into the world, if death deprived her of a protector. As there seemed no other choice but marriage or a convent, Mademoiselle d’Aubigné finally decided upon accepting the hand of Scarron.

He manifested his usual lively humour in the preparations for their marriage. When the contract was made out, he estimated his wife’s property at four louis a year, two large modest eyes, a very handsome figure, a pair of beautiful hands, and a great deal of wit.

The notary enquired what dowry he would grant.

“ Immortality,” he replied. “ The names of the wives of kings die with them ; that of the wife of Scarron will live for ever.”

Some days before the marriage, he said to one of his friends: "I shall not commit any follies for her, but shall learn much from her."

He was then only forty-two years old. Twelve years before, he had drawn his own portrait, as we have already preserved it. Such was the man to whom the young and beautiful Françoise d'Aubigné united herself, early in June, 1651—beauty wedded with extreme ugliness, health with the most deplorable infirmities, youth with decrepitude. She was then in her seventeenth year, and she consented to become the nurse of a palsied cripple, who was twenty-five years her senior.

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## II.

This strange marriage was not without advantageous results for both parties. Madame Scarron introduced a decency, grace, and refinement into the poet's household to which it had long been a stranger, and taught his muse to write with greater decorum and chastity. He sacrificed to her rigid sense and delicate taste his worst sins. In deference to her, his wit became more reticent, and his humour less licen-



tious. He submitted to her all his works, and profited by her remarks and suggestions.

On the other hand, she added to her stores of knowledge by conversing with a man, who though a buffoon, was also a scholar; and learned, under his direction, Italian, Spanish, and Latin. Her wit was developed and enriched by his fostering care. Her mind was stored with vast and varied learning. She exercised almost as great an influence over her husband's friends as over himself. Conscious of the necessity of preserving her reputation unblemished, if she would aspire to an exalted position, she felt at once that she must prevent or repair the wrong that would be done her by her husband's notoriety. She clung closely, therefore, to the open performance of her religious duties, and assumed, despite her age, an air of dignity, which imposed respect, without chilling the flow of pleasure; compensating, by the grace of her manners and the refinement of her courtesy, for her modest and womanly reserve. Despite of the equivocal nature of her position, she exercised a singular influence upon the young gallants who hovered round her; so that one of them naïvely said,

"If I must either take liberties with the Queen or Madame Scarron, I should not hesitate—I should rather take them with the Queen."

And yet, though the wit's house had become more decent, it had not become less mirthful. There was less licence ; men jested with more taste and subtlety ; conversation took a higher tone ; but that was all. The house of Scarron acquired daily a higher reputation, and to gain admission within its portals was an object of ambition to all Paris.

She soon contracted an intimacy with the celebrated women of the age—Mademoiselle de Scudéry, Madame de La Fayette, Madame de Coutanges, and Madame de Sévigné. Nor was the famous (and infamous) Ninon de l'Enclos excluded from her friendship. But all the world seems to have pardoned or tolerated this celebrated courtesan, who devoted the whole of her life to vice, and made a shameful traffic of her beauty even to an age when beauty, for most women, ceases to be anything more than a memory. Ninon had given many proofs of friendship to Scarron, which Scarron could not forget ; and Scarron's wife, fascinated by that fascination which everybody acknowledged, admitted her husband's benefactress to her closest intimacy.

The reader will not be displeased, perhaps, to see how the pious Madame Scarron wrote to Ninon de l'Enclos. The letter which we quote was addressed to her during her three years'



absence at the country seat of Monsieur Villarceaux :—

“Enclosed, Mademoiselle, are some verses which Monsieur Scarron has made for you, after having vainly attempted to make some against you. I would not permit him to send them to you ; and, see how I rely upon you ! I told him that you would receive them from my hand with more pleasure than from his. All your friends are sighing for your return. During your absence my Court has increased, but it is a poor compensation for them ; they talk, they play, they drink, they yawn. The Marquis has as great an air of *ennui* as on the first day of your departure. He cannot inure himself to it. His constancy is heroic. Return, my dearest, all Paris implores you. If Monsieur Villarceaux knew all the reports which Madame de Fiesque sets in circulation against him, he would be ashamed to retain you any longer. Saint Evremond wishes to send Châtillon, Miosseux, and Du Raincy, in the quality of knights errant, to carry you away from your old château. Return, beautiful Ninon, and restore to us the graces and the pleasures.”

But the brilliancy of these social gatherings could ill compensate for the sacrifices which poverty demanded of Scarron and his wife ; for

the poet was poor. A second marriage which his father had contracted, and the prolonged law-suits, which resulted from that marriage, had wasted all his patrimony. For three years he had enjoyed a pension of five hundred crowns, but it had not been paid since the civil commotions of the Fronde arose. His patron, Mademoiselle d'Hautefort, obtained for him from the Bishop of Mans a small living in that diocese, but this he forfeited by his marriage, which also deprived him of his title of Abbé. There only remained some moderate rents, and the sums he obtained for his compositions, which, from the name of his bookseller, he called his Marquisate of Quinet. The illustrious personages to whom he addressed his dedication, recompensed him with gifts of money. He produced some comedies, which had a tolerable success, and his "*Dom Japhet d'Arménie*" kept the stage for several seasons. But his surest resource was a pension of six hundred livres, which Fouquet, the superintendent of the finances, had granted him, and caused to be punctually paid. Thus he continued to suffer from the privations of a limited income until, in 1658, he obtained a share of an impost levied upon the Parisian hawkers, which was annually worth about six thousand livres. He owed this desirable addition to his income, in a great measure, to the friendship which Madame Fou-



quet, the wife of the all-powerful superintendent of the finances, had conceived for Madame Scarron. But it came too late to add much to his enjoyments. His infirmities increased daily ; his strength daily diminished. He faced approaching death with calmness, and was not for one moment false to his character. In bidding farewell to a friend who was setting out for Guienne, he said :

“ I feel that I shall soon die. I should quit this world without regret if I did not leave without support and without hope, a woman whom I have so many reasons to love. I commend her to you ; I commend her to all my friends. What will become of her ?”

Even to the last he laughed at his ailments. One day he was seized with so violent a hic-cough that every one thought he was about to expire. The crisis passed, however, and the patient, as soon as he could speak, exclaimed, “ If I recover, I will write a fine satire against the hic-cough !”

He made his will in burlesque rhymes. To the poets Corneille, father and son, he left five hundred pounds—of patience ; to Gilles Boileau, his enemy, the gangrene, and the falling sickness for life ; to the Academy, the power of altering the French language at its pleasure ; and to his wife, permission to re-marry.

He, also, composed his own epitaph, which is not without a touch of tender feeling :

“ Celui-ci maintenant dort,  
Fit plus de pitié que d’envie,  
Et souffrit mille fois la mort  
Avant que de perdre la vie.

“ Passant, ne fais ici de bruit,  
Garde bien que tu ne l’éveille,  
Car voici la première nuit  
Que le pauvre Scarron sommeille.”

[*Imitated.*]

He who sleeps beneath was long  
A thing to pity, not to wrong;  
A thousand times he suffered death,  
Before he drew his parting breath.

Pass on in silence, and beware  
You wake not him who slumbers here;  
'Tis the first night of sleep that e'er  
Fell to unhappy Scarron's share.

But he soon regained his wonted lightness of spirit, and seeing his relations and servants shedding tears, “ My children,” he exclaimed, “ I shall soon make you weep for me as much as I have made you laugh.”

He could only be serious when conversing with his wife, whom he tenderly thanked for the attention she had shown him, and the happiness she had given him. He commended



her with impressive earnestness to his testametary executor. And taking her hand, he sighed, "I pray you remember me sometimes. I leave you without fortune; virtue does not give one. However, be always virtuous."

He died in the month of October, 1660, aged 50 years.

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### III.

Madame Scarron was now a widow, and a widow without any means of support. Her husband's income perished with him, and he had not enjoyed his good fortune long enough, even if his natural disposition had been prone to thrift, to accumulate any savings for his widow. Offers of help, however, poured in from every side. She accepted but one, and received from the generosity of the Maréchale d'Aumont a furnished apartment belonging to a convent of Sisters Hospitallers, established near the Place Royale. She was provided by the same protectress with all that she wanted, at the outset, even clothes. But the Maréchale was not one of those who "do good by stealth, and blush to find it fame." She noised abroad her bounty to so many, that the widow at length grew weary of receiving it. "A public benefit

is almost a public reproach," and the descendant of the Aubigné's was keenly sensible of the affronts of patronage.

By the death of her husband, she seemed to have lost all that she had hoped to have secured by her marriage with him. But her cold and calculating ambition was not disappointed. She knew how much she had already gained in knowledge of the world, and in the world's knowledge of her. She was released from a tie that was becoming insupportable. For she had written to a friend of her mortification—*bien dégoûtée de sa position présente*—and now she was free to aspire to higher things. It is right, however, to state that though scandal had not left her in peace during her married life, there seems to have been no better foundation for it than the malicious insinuations of an epigram writer. She had grown weary of her husband, but had never forfeited his honour or her own. She had grown weary of her husband, but had spared him the pain of seeing her weariness. And now, at the age of twenty-five, her loveliness matured, her manners polished by intercourse with the *élite* of society, her wit quickened and enriched, her mind stored and strengthened—under the direction of the indefatigable Scarron, she was well prepared to grasp at the higher prizes

which society might place within the reach of her ambition.

In 1645, Scarron had obtained from the Queen the title of her "Sick Man by Right of Office," in compliance with a droll petition which he had addressed to her, and a small pension accompanied the title. Unfortunately, Scarron lampooned Cardinal Mazarin, and embraced the cause of the Fronde. His pension was taken from him. As the offending poet was dead, his friends thought the Cardinal might take some pity on the widow, and applied for a renewal of the pension to her. "Is she in good health?" inquired Mazarin, who never forgave. "She is very well," was the reply. "Then she can have no title to the office of 'Sick Woman to the Queen!'" An attempt was then made to obtain it from Fouquet. But Fouqué<sup>t</sup> never granted a favour to a pretty woman, without asking a recompense that some pretty women refused to give; and Madame Scarron was compelled to refrain from a petition that exposed her to the insult of a passionless débauché. Her poverty, however, was a sore trial to her virtue; for, despite the occasional succour of her friends, she fell in debt.

A pretty woman, who is also a pauper, cannot hope to escape the slings of calumny, and Saint Simon in his *Mémoires* loads the unfortunate Madame Scarron with offensive impu-

tations. After a careful examination of authorities we cannot but conclude that they were wholly undeserved. Madame de Maintenon was not a *Ninon de l'Enclos*. She had neither impulse nor sentiment; she could not err from the violence of her passions, and she did not err from calculation—for calculation told her that a good reputation was essential to the ultimate success of her ambitious projects. How high she looked, we have no means of ascertaining; but the whole course of her life shows that she was actuated by an ardent love of power, and that all her energies and forethought were devoted to obtaining a position, which should secure her as large an amount of influence as possible. She did not care to be loved; but she liked to be flattered. She wanted homage, but the homage paid to a strong mind rather than to a beautiful person. Had she been emotional, impulsive, or generous, she would never have attained to the position of wife of Louis XIV. In a path full of pitfalls it is only the cool and wary traveller that escapes from ruin; and Madame de Maintenon walked in the midst of perils.

If the “Widow Scarron” ever loved anybody, it was herself—and her reputation, because it was herself. The tone of infinite satisfaction with which she dilated on these two pleasant subjects in her conversations with the sisters of Saint Cyr—collected and published under the title

of “*Les Entretiens de Mme. de Maintenon*,”—will be understood from the following extract:

“In my early years, I was what they call *a good child*. Everybody loved me. Not one of my aunt’s servants but was charmed with me. When I grew older, I was sent into a convent. You know how I was beloved by my companions, and always for the same reason; because I thought of nothing, from morning to night, but to serve and oblige them. When I lived with that poor cripple (*ce pauvre estropié*), I mingled in the *beau monde*, where I was sought after and esteemed. Women loved me, because I was gentle in their society, and thought much more of others than of myself. Men followed me, because I had the beauty and graces of youth. I have seen everything, but always maintained my reputation unsullied. The affection, which people felt for me, was rather a general friendship, a friendship of esteem, than love. I did not desire the love of any particular individual, but of all the world; I wished my name to be pronounced with admiration and respect; to play the part of a great personage, and above all to win the approval of fashionable society (*gens de bien*). That was my idol. I am, perhaps, punished now by the excess of my popularity, as if God had said to me, in his anger,—‘Thou wouldest have glory and admiration; ah well, thou shalt

enjoy them to satiety.' When I began to be no longer young, the world's eager love of me somewhat diminished, but at the same time my influence at court arose. There was no interval. Hardly had the world made a void around me, ere the court filled it. I grew into repute, and a conduct always above suspicion preserved for me the public esteem. There is nothing that I have not been able to attempt and endure, to acquire the renown of a strong-minded woman (*femme forte*). I sacrificed every taste; but that cost me little, when I beheld the praise and the renown that were the fruits of my self-restraint. There was my weakness. I cared nothing for wealth. I wished only for honour. Tell me, my daughter, is there aught more opposed to true virtue, than that pride in which I spent my youth? It is the sin of Lucifer, and the most severely punished by that jealous God, who delights to crush the proud."

On the death of Mazarin, (March 9th, 1661), Madame Scarron ventured again to hope, and her friends pressed her case upon the notice of the Queen-mother (Anne of Austria), who now enjoyed a large amount of power. The Baron de la Garde, at the instigation of the Maréchale d'Albret, seized an opportunity of reminding her of her former bounty to Scarron, and of vividly painting the distressed condition and great merits of his widow.

“ What,” said the queen, “ was the pension, which I allowed to my ‘ Sick man by right of office ? ’ ”

“ Two thousand livres,” replied the Baron, without hesitation, although, he very well knew that it was only five hundred crowns.

“ Ah well,” said the queen, his widow shall also have two thousand livres.” And this salary was regularly paid up to the death of Anne of Austria.

Still bent upon securing the world’s praise of her virtue, as essential to the gratification of her ambition, Madame Scarron quitted her small apartment in the Place Royale, and took lodgings with the Ursulines of the Rue Saint Jacques, where she had formerly made her first communion. Here she received the élite of Parisian society, and with her pension of two thousand livres, so well managed her affairs, that she was always handsomely though simply dressed ; contrived to entertain her guests as became their social rank ; to pay her rent, and the wages of her maid ; and, nevertheless, to lay by a small sum of money every year.

She owed a good deal to the friendship of the Maréchale d’Albret ; something, whispered the scandalous world, to the partiality of her husband. At the Hôtel d’Albret assembled the best company of Paris, for the Maréchale loved art and letters, and delighted to keep up

the traditions of that gay, witty, and sparkling society, which formerly distinguished the Hôtel de Rambouillet. A favourite pastime with the ladies and gallants, who passed their evenings in pseudo literary pleasures, was making verses, and Madame Scarron, always a welcome guest, showed peculiar skill in the graceful exercise. A specimen of her talents may interest the reader.\*

One day, the witty and accomplished Abbé Testu—the same who figures so conspicuously in the letters of Madame de Sévigné—compared Madame Scarron to a garden. She replied in the following playful lines :—

“ Ah, l'ingrat, le maudit métier,  
Que le métier de geôlière !  
Il faut être barbare et fière,  
Il faut faire enrager un pauvre prisonnier :  
Non ce n'est pas là ma manière.  
Tous ceux qui sont dans mes liens  
D'eux-mêmes sont venus s'y rendre,  
Je n'ai pas cherché les moyens  
De leur plaire ou de les surprendre ;  
Prison ou liberté, je leur donne à choisir.  
Je le dis donc sans être vain :  
Je prends mes captifs sans plaisir,  
Et je sais les garder sans peine.”

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\* We follow La Beaumelle in ascribing them to Madame Scarron : Voltaire attributes them to the Abbé Testu, and they might certainly seem to be rather what the Abbé would write in her name by way of delicate flattery, than what Madame would say of herself.

[*Imitated.*]

Ah ! the accursed, unthankful part  
The gaoler plays, who steals his heart  
    In proud, cold cruelty to goad  
The unhappy captive into fruitless rage :  
Such task shall ne'er my powers engage !  
    They who are bound within my chains  
    Themselves desirous of the thraldom show'd :  
Neither to please them, nor surprise I sought,  
    And, free or fetter'd, still the choice remains.  
    This, then, I say, nor think me vain,  
Calm I receive those whom my charms have caught,  
    And without care my prisoners retain !

It was at the Hôtel d'Albret that an architect, named Barbe, predicted to the aspiring widow her future greatness. We do not learn that the incident made, at the moment, any great impression upon her ; but she remembered it afterwards, spoke of it often, and even endeavoured to find out the prophet, who, however, had been foolish enough to die before the fulfillment of his prophecy. That prophecy seemed ridiculous enough to Madame Scarron, we doubt not, when the death of Anne of Austria, in 1666, deprived her of her pension, and flung her into sudden indigence.

In this fresh distress, after having refused a suitor for her hand, whose only merit was his wealth, and whose disadvantages were age and an infamous character, she resolved upon acquiring fame as a devotee, and giving herself up

wholly to God. She took for her spiritual director the Abbé Gobelin, a doctor of the Sorbonne, who had formerly been a captain of cavalry, and who still showed the old love of strife in his prosecution of interminable law-suits. He required of her a reformation of her toilette, which had always been remarkable for its elegant simplicity ; and observing her love of society, where her *spirituel* conversation was much admired, imposed upon her a new species of self-mortification by requiring her to make herself disagreeable. What is more astonishing than the folly of the priest who commanded, is the servility of the woman who obeyed. “ I have seen the Maréchale d’Albret,” she wrote, one day ; “ *I have disgusted her by my silence*, as much as possible.” It is certain, however, that she did not adhere to this self-sacrifice throughout her after career.

Madame Scarron, some three or four years before these events, had met at the Hôtel d’Albret, the beautiful Madame de Montespan, and had behaved to her with that fascinating courtesy which so surely ensnares the superficial. She now found in her, a powerful friend. Madame de Montespan, who was in the flush of her splendid loveliness, had usurped the place of La Vallière in the affections of the king, and she obtained for *la Veuve Scarron*, the renewal of her pension. She did more. Louis

XIV. had already made her the mother of an infant, whose birth had been carefully concealed, lest the jealousy of her husband should create a public scandal. A second accouchement was at hand. The king was not emancipated from his fear of the queen's susceptibility. For these two children, a guardian, therefore, was needful ; a woman, active, discreet, sagacious, and devout. Madame de Montespan bethought herself of the fascinating widow. An offer was made to her of the delicate but important post ; but it was couched in mysterious terms, and the parentage of the children was attempted to be concealed. Madame Scarron's ambition might be satisfied with the charge of the king's bastards ; but her propriety revolted from taking care of those of Madame de Montespan. "If the children," she wrote, "are the king's, I will undertake the responsibility. I cannot charge myself without scruple with those of Madame de Montespan. The king, therefore, must give me his commands. This is my ultimatum."

Louis accordingly dispatched the minister, Louvois, to the prudent and far-seeing widow ; and when not even the representations of his ambassador would vanquish her obstinacy, he sent for her into the royal presence, and honoured her with his direct injunctions ; but her obstinacy he regarded with extreme displeasure. He looked upon her as a pedant, and the

unfavourable impression was not speedily got rid of.

Madame de Montespan's second child was born just after the close of this singular negotiation. Her accouchement took place in Paris, in a lonely house in a secluded quarter. Madame Scarron, repaired thither in a *fiacre*, masked, and removed the new-born with infinite precaution. It was the Duke of Maine, who on the 31st of March, 1670, came into the world with so much mystery. The first child, a girl, was already upwards of a twelve-month old ; she died in 1672, without being publicly acknowledged by the king.

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#### IV.

Madame Scarron's ambition, was more than satisfied with the position in which the favour of Madame de Montespan, and her infidelity to her husband, had fortunately placed her. She discerned with complacency, the great results that must necessarily flow from such an event, and it was for this reason that she had persisted in requiring a personal order from the king ; she wished to be in the king's service, not in that of Madame de Montespan, clearly perceiving that the king's satisfaction would produce more abundant and per-



manent fruits than Madame de Montespan's gratitude.

The new situation was not without its cares, which she, at a later period, vividly described. The two children were placed, each with its nurse, in two different houses, situated at some slight distance from Paris. She had to visit them daily, to watch over their food, to look after their nurses, and meanwhile to preserve her old habits, so as not to awaken the suspicions of her friends. "I mounted ladders, and did the work of upholsterers and other workmen, because they were not permitted to enter the secret apartments. The nurses put their hands to nothing, lest fatigue should injure the quality of their milk. I often went from one house to the other on foot, and in disguise, carrying linen or provisions under my arms. When one of the children was ill, I sat up all night, and returned to my house in the morning by a back way. After dressing myself, I then went in my carriage to pay my visits at the Hôtel d'Albret, or Richelieu, so that society knew nothing more than that I had a secret to keep. And lest they should penetrate that secret, I caused myself to be let blood, that I might not blush."

But if her office brought her so much toil and so many anxieties, it was not without its compensations. Her frequent interviews with

Madame de Montespan, and the peculiar relations she held towards her, necessarily procured her a gradually increasing influence, and she exerted that influence in behalf of her friends, and especially, her brother, Charles d'Aubigné. From time to time she took her pupils to court, where the king and Madame de Montespan saw them in one of the private apartments. Louis XIV. still affected a mysterious reserve, which, however, can have imposed upon no one. "The children," wrote Madame Scarron, "were the day before yesterday at Saint Germain. The nurse entered, and I remained in the ante-chamber. 'Whose children are these?' enquired the king, 'They belong certainly,' replied the nurse, 'to the lady who lodges with us, I judge so by her agitation when they have the slightest illness.' 'And who,' resumed the king, 'do you think is the father?' 'I don't know,' replied the nurse, 'but I imagine he is some duke, or some President of the Parliament.' The beautiful lady [Montespan], was delighted with this answer, and the king laughed at it until he wept."

On the birth of a third child, the Count de Vexin, Madame de Montespan purchased a large mansion, situated in the heart of the meadows, near Vaugirard, and established there Madame Scarron with her three children. The widow received no visitors. She disappeared

suddenly from the gay world of which she had been the ornament. But in anticipation of any accident, such as might arise from a stranger's meeting the nurse, or hearing the sounds of children, she took with her a daughter of Madame de Hendicourt. The king often visited her secretly, and the confidential intercourse that ensued gradually effaced the prejudices he had conceived against her. He had previously regarded her as a she-pedant, a "blue," a *précieuse*—in the acceptation of that word which Molière has rendered so ridiculous—and often spoke of her to Madame de Montespan, as "your fine genius of a woman." In her *Conversations*, the following anecdote occurs:—"Madame de Hendicourt having unthinkingly said to the king, on returning from a walk, that Madame de Montespan and I had been conversing before her in a manner so exalted, that she had lost sight of us altogether, he was so displeased that he could not conceal his feelings, and it was some time before I again dared to appear before him."

But this prejudice rapidly died out, and Louis, who loved his children, was touched by the almost maternal devotion Madame Scarron carefully displayed. On more than one occasion she contrived that her affection should favourably contrast with the indifference of their mother; and on the death of

the eldest, towards the close of the year 1672, she showed so violent a grief, that the king was heard to say, "She knows how to love, does Madame! There would be some pleasure in being loved by her."

What ambitious hopes, meanwhile, were stirring the heart—what daring projects animating the brain, of this cold and crafty woman! She saw herself the confidante, she might aspire to be—what? the mistress of the king. She was thirty-seven years old, but her regular and statuesque beauty—for her good looks almost amounted to beauty—was as yet unimpaired. Her figure was graceful, her manners possessed a peculiar fascination, her refined wit and sagacious intellect lent a surprising charm to her conversation. Her penetrating judgment soon gauged the depth of the king's somewhat shallow mind, and she perceived how necessary to him, was adulation; how easily he might be ruled by one, who contented with the reality, would not aim at the appearance of power; how surely the narrow heart and selfish imagination that had formerly grasped at love, would finally console itself with fanatical devotion. She adapted herself to his weakness with admirable tact, and was soon rewarded for her exertions by his manifest pleasure in her society. The very prejudice he had once entertained now worked in her favour, for

when we abandon a strong antipathy, we are prepared to entertain as ardent an affection. In our haste to do justice, we go too quickly and too far.

By some mysterious divination the public already anticipated the future; had penetrated the secret, and traced it to its natural consequences. Tongues wagged freely, and lively imaginations indulged in dreams which later events showed to have been almost prophetic. Madame Scarron, as the following letter shows, was well-informed in the gossip which prevailed in the city and at court, and, moreover, had learned that Madame de Montespan begun to fear a rival in her protégée. Thus she writes to Madame de Coutanges in a tone of unwonted irony :—

“ Write to me all that people say, all that you yourself think. What a pleasure to imagine one’s self universal for the reasons you mention ! Is it possible that Monsieur and Madame La Fayette are not satisfied, and can scarcely believe that I have supplanted *my friend* ? How many leeches will they need when they shall know all my talent has accomplished ? You will acknowledge, madame, that this little adventure is an admirable supplement to all my others, and that nothing remains after this, but to retire to La Trappe and finish gloriously so fine a life. The Abbé Testu believes me there already ; but tell him, if you please,

that he may content himself with writing very cold *billet*s, and leave you to make my gazettes of all that enters your head.

“I am in very good health, shut up in a sufficiently handsome house, with a capacious garden, seeing only the servants, but quite ravished, quite *extasied* with the contemplation of my last adventure. I see every evening your fat cousin [Louvois ?], who tells me anecdotes of his master ; and then he goes, for I do not care about conversing with him long. The master sometimes comes, whether I like or do not like, and *goes away despairing, without being repulsed !* You know well that on his return he finds some person to speak with (*il trouve à qui parler*—Madame de Montespan). For myself, I remain tranquil in the truthfulness of my conduct.

“Such, madame, is a slight picture of my life. I have given it to you willingly, but let it go no further, if you please.”

The virtuous resistance at which this letter hints, was well-calculated to surprise and attract the irresistible Louis, who had never before been troubled by the scruples of the woman he chose to favour. It was managed by the clever lady, we may be sure, with infinite delicacy ; she took care to foster hope, while checking confidence ; she did not humiliate her royal lover by an abrupt repulse, while she

maintained the dignity of a modest woman. The King "*s'en retourne désespéré sans être rebuté.*" In this expressive phrase one reads the moral of Madame de Maintenon's career. It reveals the secret of her policy ; it indicates the subtlety of her mind. A king, and a king who is also a despot, is a trout that it might puzzle the keenest angler to tickle successfully ; but this woman, at thirty-seven, had acquired a wonderful knowledge of men and manners, of the follies and weakness of human nature ; and her sharp perception of character, her refinement of address, and elegance of wit, enabled her to play her hazardous game with wonderful success. She did not wish to be the King's mistress, but she desired to be his "guide, philosopher, and friend."

Under her skilful management, the temporary love-fever of Louis passed into a feeling of steady esteem.

"He made," says a recent writer, "his confidant and friend of the woman who had refused to be his mistress, until the time arrived, when, the Queen being dead, and he himself arrived at an age when the blood no longer glows with ardour, nor the heart with illusions, he understood that the only hope of domestic happiness which remained for him was, as Voltaire has said, 'to give himself an agreeable and submissive com-

panion, and to blend with the cares of empire, the calm pleasures of a private life.' ”

But this was yet to come. A step in advance, however, was made, when the King's public recognition of his children enabled him to summon them to Versailles, and to establish them there with their gouvernante (December 1673). Madame Scarron was now at court.

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## V.

Between Madame de Montespan and Madame Scarron there now arose very frequent quarrels, prompted by jealousy on the one side, embittered by independence on the other.

Madame de Montespan was of a lofty spirit and a quick temper. She did not hide from herself the precarious nature of her splendour; she knew that a caprice was sufficient to strip her in an instant of all her glory. Nor was she without a skeleton of the Past to remind her of the instability of her position. La Vallière was still at court, although on the eve of quitting it for ever, to retire to the dreary solitude of a convent; and as she passed unnoticed, pale, and miserable, through the gay crowds that had once waited upon her with obsequious homage,

Madame de Montespan could not fail to be moved by unpleasant reflections on her own precarious tenure of power. These reflections were quickened by her perception of the advantages enjoyed by Madame Scarron in the charge of the children whom Louis loved and was proud of. The king took a constant interest in their education, which brought him into daily contact with their governess ; and he showed himself keenly sensible of her ability, prudence, and devotion. Thus was Madame de Montespan disquieted, irritated, and alarmed ; and at times she made Madame Scarron feel the superiority of her position ; at times she restrained the king from acts of munificence which were really innocent. Oftentimes their disputes, which daily grew more animated, turned upon the education of the children ; and then, between the governess who threatened to retire, and the mother who took her stand upon her maternal rights, all the exquisite tact of Louis was necessary to effect a compromise. But these quarrels resulted usually in Madame Scarron's victory. Her adversary, like all impetuous spirits, soon exhausted her forces, and was easily pacified. The colder nature of Madame Scarron persevered until the end was gained. She was never in the wrong. Her discretion was perfect, and, consequently, her triumph complete.

Here is a curious glimpse of the "interior

economy" of Versailles, as furnished in the pages of Madame de Caylus :—

"One day, when a crisis had taken place between the two rivals, the king suddenly entered, and seeing them both excited and heated, enquired the cause.

"Madame Scarron, with the utmost composure, replied, 'If your Majesty will pass into yonder chamber, I shall have the honour of informing you.' The king went. Madame Scarron followed him, and Madame de Montespan remained alone.

"When Madame Scarron found herself *tête-à-tête* with the king, she concealed nothing. She painted the injustice and severity of Madame Montespan in a graphic manner, and made him understand how much she had to apprehend from their effects. The circumstances she cited were not unknown to the king; but as he still loved Madame de Montespan, he attempted to excuse her, and, in order to represent her as not possessing too hard a heart, he said to Madame Scarron, 'Have you not often perceived that her fine eyes fill with tears, when any one relates to her a generous and touching action?'"

But each of these social battles was a defeat for Madame de Montespan, and tended to establish her rival's influence with the king. The affection which the young Duke of Maine



entertained for her was an additional source of favour. She relates a characteristic anecdote in one of her letters to the Countess de Saint Geran. "Matters," she says, "begin to take a more favourable turn. Do you wish to know, madame, what has procured for me so handsome a present? People think that I owe it to Madame de Montespan: I owe it to my little prince. The king playing with him, and being pleased with the manner in which he replied to his questions, told him that he was very reasonable. 'I must needs be so,' answered the child; 'I have a lady near me who is reason itself.' 'Go and tell her,' rejoined the king, 'that you will give her this evening, a hundred thousand francs for your sugar-plums.'"

In the same letter she does not conceal her dislike to Madame de Montespan:—"The mother," she writes, "embroils me with the king; her son reconciles me with him. I am not two days following in the same position. I cannot accustom myself to this life, I who thought I was able to accustom myself to everything! People would not envy me my situation, if they knew the difficulties that surrounded it, and what chagrin it constantly costs me. It is a subjection without parallel. I have neither time to write, nor to pray—a suitable slavery."

From a letter, which, in July 1674, she writes to her confessor, the Abbé Gobelin, it appears that Madame de Montespan had hopes to "marry off" her rival.

"Madame de Richelieu and Madame de Montespan," she writes, "have planned for me a marriage, which will not, however, take place. It is a duke, uncivil and beggarly; a source of misery and embarrassment into which it would be imprudent to throw myself. I already suffer enough in a position which everybody envies, without seeking it in a condition which causes the unhappiness of three quarters of the world."

The duke so flatteringly described, was the Duke de Villars, the uncle of the famous Marshal, and the alliance, as Madame Scarron prophesied, was never concluded.

The gifts which she received from the king enabled her at length to purchase an estate, and at the same time to get rid of an inconvenient name. As the widow Scarron, her position was still ambiguous, and the name awoke recollections which were neither pleasing to the king nor to herself. The estate which she bought was called Maintenon; was situated fourteen leagues from Paris, and ten from Versailles, and was worth yearly eleven thousand livres. She announced the purchase in a letter to her brother, and concluded the commercial estimate with a pious reflection:

“ It is sadly foolish,” she wrote, “ not to put oneself in the condition, in which one would wish to be at the hour of death.” It is thus that your sagacious devotees “ improve the occasion,” and have always one eye turned towards heaven and the other towards earth; worshipping at the same time—in defiance of the warning of the Divine—two masters, God and the world !

Madame de Montespan once gave her four hundred louis for her clothes: “ All that the Buligny [her milliner] has sent me,” she thereupon writes to Madame de Saint Géran, “ is in the best taste.” So far the woman of the world ; and then the devotee appears:—“ But what,” she exclaims, “ what are all these vanities, all these pleasures, for one who is disgusted with the world and all its works !”

To the estate just purchased, a title was attached, with all the manorial and feudal rights which gave value to the title, and thus, in less than a year after her assumption of the charge of the king’s children, the widow of the poet Scarron had wonderfully blossomed into—*Madame la Marquise de Maintenon*, the name by which this extraordinary woman is best known in history.

The year 1675, was a remarkable one in the fortunes of Le Grand Monarque and Madame de Montespan. The shameless immorality of

the king's life had awaked the indignation of all good men, and especially aroused the wrath of the Church. Once or twice he had repented of his misdeeds, separated from his mistress, and vowed amendment; but he had speedily relaxed in his virtuous efforts. In this year, however, the eloquent Bourdaloue preached the Lent sermon at Versailles, and with extraordinary boldness, force and truth, proclaimed the outraged laws of morality and religion. Neither the purple robe of the king, nor the sumptuous attire of his mistress was impervious to the keen shafts of his earnest eloquence. The king was so moved that he once more determined to change his mode of life. He summoned Bossuet to confirm him in his resolution, and listened with reverence to the prelate's animated exhortations. Bossuet was appointed the negotiator between the penitent king and the mistress, who was less devout, because she had so much to lose by her devotion! Madame de Montespan, however submitted; whether in appearance only, or in sincerity, we will not pretend to decide. She retired from court to that very mansion at Vaugirard, where Madame de Maintenon had brought up her children. And Madame de Maintenon now stepped in to second Bossuet's exhortations by her own exertions. She played her part with admirable gentleness,

and the king had so accustomed himself to respect her counsel, that he received her opinions, even on a subject so delicate, with a surprising degree of submissiveness.

Madame de Montespan neither thanked Bossuet nor Madame de Maintenon for their ardour in the work of conversion; she had found sin so profitable, that she could not deny herself the luxury of sinning. But Louis remained firm in his new-born attachment to morality, received absolution, and set out for the army without hazarding an interview with "*la Belle Dame*." Meanwhile, she, however, had approached as near to him as she was able; and established herself at Clagny, a house in the immediate neighbourhood of Versailles, which the king had formerly given her. Still Louis remained immovable, though there were many who wisely mistrusted the duration of a conversion so sudden, and so violent.

"My father," said the king, one day, to Bourdaloue, "you ought to be satisfied with me: Madame de Montespan is at Clagny."

"Yes, sire," replied Bourdaloue, "but Heaven would be better satisfied if Clagny were seventy leagues from Versailles."

The king returned from the army on the eighth of July, and Madame de Montespan at the same time returned from the baths of

Bourbon. It now became a question whether the latter should be wholly excluded from court, simply because the king had adopted a virtuous resolution. Her friends and kinsmen were the most sagacious, held that both by birth and office—she was lady of honour to the queen—she had a right to attend there, and that that attendance by no means necessitated any departure from the paths of morality. There remained, however, one difficulty. Should she be introduced to the king in public, without any preparation? The Bishop of Meaux advised that he should first receive her in private, but to avoid the inconveniences of a *tête-à-tête* interview, that several grave matrons and respectable ladies (*de graves matrones et dames fort respectables*, says Cardinal Dubois), should be assembled as a guard of honour! The advice was followed, and the interview took place. After the usual formalities, the king entered into conversation with her. Gradually he drew her towards a window. They spoke in a subduing whisper; they wept! *La Belle Dame* put forth all her powers of fascination; and, at length, both made a profound reverence to the venerable matrons, who were silent spectators of this strange scene, and calmly retired into another chamber. Madame de Montespan was once more enrolled as the royal favourite; and Madame de

Maintenon received a temporary checkmate in the difficult game she played.

Her anger and disappointment are plainly visible in the letter she addressed to Madame de Saint Géran upon this disgraceful incident. "I could easily have told you," she wrote, "that Monsieur de Condom [Bossuet] would play in this affair the part of a dupe. He has plenty of talent, but not of talent adapted to a court. With all his zeal, he has done precisely what Lauzun would have been ashamed to do. He wished to convert them, and he has brought them together again! All these projects, madame, are useless. It is only Father de la Chaise [Bourdaloue], who can successfully develop them. He has deplored with me twenty times the errors of the king; but why does he not absolutely interdict him from taking the sacrament? He is contented with a demi-conversion. You see that there is really some truth in the *little letters* [the Lettres Provinciales]. Père de la Chaise is an honest man, but the air of the court tarnishes the purest virtue, and relaxes the most rigid."

How admirably Madame de Maintenon's zeal for the king's soul harmonized with her ambition to become the king's confidant! But who can gaze on these scenes "behind the scenes"—on these strange embroglios of elo-

quent bishops, royal mistresses, and easy confessors—without feeling the justice of that terrible revolution which eighty years later shattered the throne of the Bourbons in the dust? This is the great conqueror who aimed at renewing the empire of Charlemagne, who pushed forward the frontiers of France to the Meuse, and meditated the subjugation of Austria and Holland; whom Molière and Racine flattered, and philosophers termed *Le Grand*; who drew to himself the glories of Boufflers, Turenne, and Vauban, and to his people appeared an awful Jove, to be worshipped with prostrate awe. On the public stage, and in the eyes of the applauding spectator, he plays his part with admirable majesty; but go behind the curtain, and you see him the dupe of one ambitious woman, whose only merit was her beauty—and of another, whose main recommendation was her pretended devoutness; and this king of kings, whose nod made Europe tremble, involves priests and prelates in his selfish debaucheries. Let us own, however, that he made vice respectable, and surrounded it with the decencies of a formidable etiquette. His brother of England, Charles II., played the rake in public, and introduced into his court the riot of the streets. But Louis was always *Le Grand Monarque*, even with his mistresses!

Madame de Montespan had recovered appar-

ently all her empire, but it was an empire founded upon habit and upon memory, rather than true passion. She was now nearly forty years old, and still preserved her beauty ; but that beauty had no longer the charm of freshness for the weary Louis, who, above all things, required to be amused, and could only be amused by novelty. While retaining, therefore, her position as mistress by right of office, the volatile fancy of the king flew from Madame de Soubise, whom he loved just six weeks, to Mademoiselle de Ludres, who sparkled and vanished like a shooting star, and Mademoiselle de Fontanges, whose reign was more prolonged, and whose honours culminated in the title of duchess, and a yearly pension of twenty thousand crowns. Madame de Montespan did not witness these infidelities with calmness, but wearied the king with reproaches, and alternated with the rise and fall of each new passion, from the depths of despair to the heights of exultation. Meanwhile, the Maintenon daily strengthened her position, and affected an air of rigid morality, which imposed both upon the king and the mistress.

To the one she said, "God forbids adultery ;" to the other, "God condemns the ties which you are so unwilling to break ;" and thus, having satisfied her conscience, she was prepared to listen to the king's angry complaints, and the

mistress's jealous murmurs. To Louis, this calm, composed, and sagacious woman, whom no breath of passion seemed ever to disturb, who surrounded herself with an atmosphere of purity, was like a special blessing from Heaven intended to afford him a haven of repose from the cares of his kingdom and the intrigues of his court. He enjoyed the equable flow of her conversation and the charming gentleness of her manners. He relished exceedingly her subdued but ardent admiration of his illustrious self. Her flattery was not the vulgar exaggeration of words, but the delicate compliments of look and attitude. It was something new, something refined and fresh, which acted like a spell upon the mind of a king whom the fulsome adulation of courtiers and sycophants had almost satiated.

The progress of the Maintenon was steady and even, like the roll of a mighty river; that of the Montespan was broken and perturbed, like a stream which spends its strength in leaps and cataracts. The latter was not insensible of her rival's daily increasing ascendancy; and broke into frequent bursts of passionate remonstrance, which fell against the serene equanimity of the subtle Maintenon, like the spray of a turbid sea upon an immovable rock. From the letters of the astute Marquise we may obtain some

vivid glimpses of the inner life of the French Court.

To Madame de St. Géran she writes :—

“The Montespan accuses me of loving the king. I laughed at the charge, and replied that it was unbecoming in her to reproach me with a fault of which she had given me the example. ‘But,’ she rejoined, ‘do you not put it into his head that he loves a person——’ She did not conclude the sentence; and it was the first time that I had seen her control her transports of rage. She told me that my influence would not last as long as her own. I answered with firmness, that at my age one ought not to take umbrage at a lively wit; that my conduct, of which she had been a witness for ten years following, belied her suspicions; that I had so little thought of the design which she had attributed to me, that I had often prayed her to obtain me permission to retire; that I would no longer endure her arrogant outbursts (*ses hauteurs*); that the inequalities of her temper shortened my days by the chagrin they caused me. ‘And what retains you here?’ said she. ‘The will of the king,’ I replied; ‘my duty, my gratitude, and the interest of my friends.’ This conversation has not been carried any further, and behold me, therefore, left in my solitude to sorrow over my troubles, and seek consolation from you.”

To the same, written at the time of the king's passion for Mademoiselle Fontanges:—

“The king had yesterday a very animated conversation with Madame de Montespan. I was present. Diana [de Fontanges] was the subject of it. I admired the king's patience and the violence of that boaster (*cette glorieuse*). All was finished with these terrible words: 'I have told you already, madame, that I do not wish to be disturbed' (*je ne veux pas être gêné*).\* Madame de Montespan asks my advice. I speak to her of God; she thinks I have a secret understanding with the king. She rages against the poor girl, against Père de La Chaise, against Monsieur de Noailles; she magnifies the expenses, she invents calumnies. She passes hours with Monsieur de Louvois and Madame de Thianges. She deplores the fate of princes. Habit has confirmed her attachment to the king. I fear he only returns it out of pity.”

To the same, five weeks later:—

“We are born to suffer. Each day of my life is marked by some new trouble. The bounties of the king do not compensate me for the loss of my tranquillity. Madame de Montespan will have it that I seek to be his mistress.

\* If we might venture to put so low a phrase in a royal mouth, we would translate the king's speech into familiar English thus: “I don't want to be bothered.”

‘But,’ said I, ‘has he then three?’ ‘Yes,’ she rejoined; ‘myself in name, that girl in fact, and you in heart.’ I represented to her in all mildness, that she listened too much to the suggestions of her resentment. She answered that she knew my artifices, and that it was unfortunate for her she had not listened to her resentment. She reproached me with the benefits she and the king had conferred, and told me that she had nourished me and that I had supplanted her. You know what all this is. It is a strange thing that we cannot live together, and yet that we cannot separate. I love her, and cannot persuade myself that she hates me.’

It was in 1677 that Madame de Maintenon conceived the clever idea of printing some historical extracts, written by her pupil, the Duke of Maine, under the direction of his preceptor, the Abbé Léragois. These were contained in a volume, entitled “*Oeuvres diverses d’un auteur de sept ans*,” and inscribed to Madame de Montespan in a dedicatory epistle, written, according to some authorities, by Racine; according to others, by Madame de Maintenon herself.

This pupil of hers, whom she loved like a son, possessed, at this early age, a mordant wit and a precocious intellect; but the training which had developed his mental powers, also

stimulated the evil tendencies of his character. In the scandalous “*Mémoires du Cardinal Dubois*” he is pourtrayed as a monster of wickedness.

“The Duke of Maine,” he says, “did not resemble other young prodigies, for his wit did not decrease as he grew older. I do not well know whether, if I put aside myself out of modesty, he had his equal in dissimulation and malignity. His external appearance was seductive, there was something of the fascination of the serpent in his look, but he had also its venom in his heart. To lie, to cheat, to destroy, his resources were inexhaustible; he showed no pity to his best friends to gain his object. To amuse, divert, and charm, he had devices which attached to him everyone who did not know him intimately. His timidity, which was a kind of augmented poltroonery, showed itself on so many occasions that Madame would say she could not conceive how he had the courage to live. The king was especially troubled by this incomparable cowardice, while he appeared to be so fierce a rhodomontade: he sounded himself the trumpet for battle, and then took refuge in his tent.

“Madame de Maintenon, however, admired and cherished her work. She had so well indoctrinated him, that he felt nothing but indifference for his mother. He affected extreme

devotion, aped philosophy, and assumed an air of savagery to secure the love of the king, who did not like the objects of his affection to lavish their regards upon others. This conduct, skilfully combined, showed him gifted with a fine head for intrigue. When Madame de Montespan, by her violence and jealousy, had forced the king on the side of Madame de Maintenon, the Duke of Maine espoused the cause of his gouvernante against his mother. He perceived that it was best for him to avoid being entangled in the approaching disgrace of Madame de Montespan. He foresaw at once the advantages which he might derive from the favour of Madame de Maintenon. This was his master-stroke of sagacious perfidy. In this matter the Bishop of Meaux [Bossuet], who had attached himself to the chariot of the new favourite, directed him, and he undermined his mother with his father, solicited her to quit the Court, and finished by conveying to her the king's commands without softening their severity."

Side by side with this bitter sketch let us place the dedication, written by Racine, and signed by Madame de Maintenon :—

“ Madam, behold the youngest of authors comes to demand your protection for his works. He would have wished to wait until he had accomplished his eighth year, but that

he feared to be suspected of ingratitude, if he lived more than seven years in the world without giving you some public marks of his affection.

“ In reality, Madam, he owes to you a large portion of all he is. Although his birth was fortunate, and there are few authors whom Heaven has regarded so favourably as himself, he acknowledges that your conversation has done much to perfect in his person what nature had begun. If he thinks with some justice, if he expresses himself with some grace, and if he already knows how to estimate men with discernment, these are the qualities which he has attempted to borrow from you. For me, Madam, who know his most secret thoughts, I know with what admiration he listens to you, and I can assure you with truth that he studies you much better than all his books.

“ You will find in the work which I present to you, some fine incidents of ancient history; but he fears that in the throng of marvellous events, which have distinguished your own days, you will not be much moved with all that he can teach you of the past ages. He fears this the more reasonably, because he has himself experienced the same thing in reading books. He has sometimes found it strange that men should impose upon themselves the necessity of learning by heart

authors who describe events so much inferior in importance to those that transpire before us. Why should he be struck by the victories of the Greeks and Romans, and all that Florus and Justin relate to us? His nurses, from the cradle, have accustomed him to hear of far grander achievements. People have spoken to him, as of a prodigy, of a city which the Greeks took in ten years. He is but seven years old, and he has already heard *Te Deums* in France for the capture of more than a hundred towns.

“ All this, Madam, somewhat disgusts him with antiquity. He is naturally proud. I perceive that he believes himself sprung of a noble race, and with the eulogiums that persons pass in his hearing upon Alexander and Cæsar, I know not whether he makes any comparison with the children of those great men. I am certain that you will not disapprove of this slight haughtiness of his, and you will find that he does not mistake when he judges of himself as a hero; but you will also acknowledge that I understand the art of making presents, and that in my design of dedicating to you this book, I could not select an author more agreeable to you, or one in whom you would feel a deeper interest.”

Such was the exquisite piece of flattery, which Madame de Maintenon offered at the

shrine of Le Grand Monarque ; for it must be confessed that it dwells more upon *his* achievements, than upon the virtues of the lady to whom it was nominally inscribed. Louis received the gift with rapture, and in his pride in the precocious abilities of his son, found an additional stimulant to his affection for his son's *gouvernante*. But the time had arrived when that office ceased to be necessary. The Duke of Maine, in 1679, reached his tenth year, and a suitable establishment was provided for him. The education of Mademoiselle de Nantes was also far advanced. The Count de Vexin and Mademoiselle de Tours dragged through a sickly childhood which offered no hopes of maturer years. The duties of Madame de Maintenon were thus on the point of terminating ; but the king had no intention of permitting the retirement from court of a woman who so subtly flattered his self-love.

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## VI.

On the marriage of the Dauphin to the daughter of the Elector of Bavaria, Madame de Maintenon received a provision, which released her from even a state of apparent dependence upon Madame de Montespan. In

forming the household of the Dauphiness, the post of Mistress of the Robes (*dame d'atours*) was given to the Maréchale de Rochefort, and a new office was created, that of second Mistress of the Robes, which was conferred upon the ex-gouvernante. She was thus raised to an equality of rank with Madame de Montespan ; she was introduced into the intimacy of the royal circle ; her position at court was established ; and her influence with the king so openly demonstrated that the courtiers basked eagerly in the mild rays of this rising sun.

Madame de Maintenon was skilled in the art of conversation. She knew how to flatter the foible of every individual, to make each contribute his share to the general fund of amusement, to soften antipathies, to prevent periods of tedium or *ennui*, to keep the ball constantly rolling, to enliven by a stroke of wit, or divert by an entertaining anecdote. Her talents were essentially social. She had no grasp of mind, no profundity of intellect, no delicacy of imagination ; but she had a lively humour, a marvellous degree of self-command, and a fascinating address. In her apartment, she assembled a circle of gay and clever personages, whom she contrived to keep on terms of good humour with themselves and each other ; and her *réunions* had so many

attractions for the king that he daily increased the length of his visits. "His Majesty," says Madame de Sévigné in her charming *Letters*, "spends two hours after dinner in the chamber of Madame de Maintenon, conversing with a friendship, freedom, and naturalness, which renders it the most desirable place in the world. He was there the other day for three hours. . . . I am told that every one treats the Lady with fear and respect, and that the ministers pay to her the court which others pay to them."

Madame de Montespan had the mortification of watching, without being able to resent, the growing ascendancy of her rival. She no longer saw the king in private; but conjointly with the astute and intriguing Louvois, and the plotting La Rochefoucauld,\* she made one more attempt to renew the ties which Time had broken. Only a partial and a temporary success rewarded their exertions, but it was sufficient to disturb Madame de Maintenon in her roseate dreams. The following extracts from her letters will best develope the phases of the intrigue.

"Monsieur de Louvois has contrived for Madame de Montespan a *tête-à-tête* with the

\* Not the celebrated author of *Les Maximes*, but his son.

king. We have for some time suspected this design, have studied its stages, taken precautions against the opportunities, and sought to overthrow their plans ; but they were so well taken that at length we fell into the snare. At this moment the *éclaircissement* has taken place, and love alone will be listened to to-day. The king is firm, but Madame de Montespan is very amiable in her tears. Madame the Dauphiness is at her devotions. Her piety has awakened in the king's mind some serious reflections ; but it needs only a moment for the flesh to destroy the work of grace. This princess has made it a point of conscience to labour for the conversion of the king. I fear that she does but weary him, and will make him hate religion. I beg of her to moderate her zeal."

"I had flattered myself," she writes in a later letter, "that Madame de Montespan would cease to persecute me, and that I should at length be able to live in safety near a princess who gives to the Court an example much admired, and but little followed. She is reconciled with the king : Louvois has done this ! She has forgotten nothing that could injure me ; has drawn of me the most frightful portrait. My God, thy will be done ! She came to-day into my apartments, and overwhelmed me with reproaches and insults. The

king surprised us in the midst of a conversation, which finished better than it commenced. He ordered us to embrace and to love each other: you know that this latter condition does not fulfil itself (*ne se commande pas*). He added laughing, that it was easier to give peace to Europe than to two women."

The temporary triumph of Madame de Montespan awoke in her rival a very lively sentiment of concern for the king's salvation. Thus, on the 10th of October, 1680, she writes,—“I receive every day fresh favours from the king; but my health, which daily grows weaker, will not permit me to enjoy them long. All that I acquire in influence, I lose in tranquillity; this life is intolerable. The king mistrusts and fears me; he loads me with favours to stop my mouth. He loves truth, and does not wish to hear it; he lives in a habitude of mortal sin which makes me tremble. I can no longer witness all these things; if they continue, I must retire.”

But the dream of passion soon expired, and Louis returned to the devout *gouvernante*, who had proved too powerful a rival for the discarded Montespan. He was thenceforth faithful to her, and her ascendancy over him daily increased, until she directed the councils of the empire, and by her narrow prejudices and

bigoted sympathies reduced it to a pitiable degree of humiliation and suffering.

It must be owned that her first employment of her undoubted influence was instigated by praiseworthy motives. She succeeded in effecting a decent reconciliation between the king and queen, and in procuring for the latter a modified kind of conjugal happiness which she did not live long to enjoy. She next addressed herself to a less laudable task, and in this, too, unhappily succeeded. She converted the lover of La Vallière and Montespan into a furious bigot.

Louis XIV. had never received any religious instruction, was ignorant of the first principles of philosophy, and had been taught from his childhood that it was blasphemous to exercise reason in matters connected with faith or the Church. By the Church, he understood the bishops who hovered round him, or the priests who received his confessions. A long career of glory, a weary succession of criminal passions, had disposed his prejudiced mind to find its latest consolations in an abject devotion. Unable to conceive of rational piety, he was impelled by the weakness of his intellect and the influences which surrounded him into a rabid fanaticism. It seemed to him that only by implicit obedience to the Church—that is, to the said bishops and priests—could he obtain pardon for

the sins which he repented of, because he could no longer enjoy. Thus he became an instrument in the hands of the Jesuits, who availed themselves with wonderful skill of the natural tendencies of his character, and his love of absolute power was made to subserve their bold and sanguinary designs. For the glory of God and of Louis XIV. he was prepared to convert all his subjects, as he had been ready to crush all his enemies. Soon he began to look upon a Jansenist or a Huguenot as not only a blasphemer of God, but a traitor to the State. When the Duke of Orléans was on the point of setting out for Spain to join the Duke of Berwick, the king asked who composed his suite. The Duke named, among others, Monsieur Fontpertuis.

“What, my nephew!” exclaimed Louis, “the son of that madwoman who has followed Arnauld everywhere! A Jansenist! I am unwilling that such a man should accompany you.”

“My faith, sire,” replied the Duke of Orléans, “I do not know what the mother may have done, but as for the son—he a Jansenist! Why, he does not believe in a God!”

“Is it possible?” rejoined the king; “are you sure of this? If so, there is no harm done; you can take him with you.”

An atheist was less intolerable in the royal eyes than a Jansenist !

This bigotry of the king exercised a fatal influence on the fortunes of France, abroad and at home. Neither he nor Madame de Maintenon chose a general of an army, or a minister of state for any special ability, but because he was, or pretended to be, devout. Thus Madame de Maintenon writes to a friend respecting the illustrious captain, Monsieur de Catinat :—

“ He knows his business, but he does not know God. The king is unwilling to trust his affairs to men without religion. Monsieur de Catinat thinks that his arrogant philosophy suffices for everything ; it is a sad pity that he does not love God.”

Catinat, therefore, was put aside, and commanders employed who were devout only at court, and generals only on the parade-ground.

Once, when Prince Eugene was about to share the conduct of a campaign with Marlborough, and was ignorant what adversaries would oppose them, he said :—

“ If it is Villeroy, *I* can beat him ; if it is Vendôme, *we* will beat him ; if it is Catinat, *I* shall be beaten.”

Fortunately for Europe, it was *not* Catinat.

But at home the fanaticism of the king and

his confidant was yet more pernicious to the fame and resources of France. The revocation of the Edict of Nantes, under whose shelter the Huguenot artisans had peaceably laboured to augment the national wealth, drove out of the country its most skilful workmen, and supplied more tolerant nations with new staples of trade, and fresh branches of commercial enterprise. It was calculated that in a few months upwards of fifty thousand families quitted France, and scattered themselves over Holland, Germany, and England. Those that remained were exposed to a furious persecution. Children were torn from their parents, and immured in convents to be brought up in the Catholic faith. All Calvinistic ministers were commanded to abjure their religion or their country. The horrors of civil war in the Cevennes, the massacres that deluged two thirds of France in blood, proceeded from the zeal of Louis XIV.

When a king is a bigot, his courtiers become devotees. The Court of Louis now echoed with psalms and prayers ; everybody went to mass and high mass ; the glittering dresses of the ladies gave way to simpler and austerer robes ; the gallants assumed a serious aspect, and discarded the braveries of fashion. The servile literature of France changed to suit the changed character of the prince. No book appeared that had not an air of sanctity. Art, which



had so long revelled in a greater licence than antiquity had allowed it, also consecrated itself to the service—not of the temple, but—the convent.

Two great events now distinguished the career of Madame de Maintenon (A.D. 1683). She established the famous Ecole de Saint Cyr, for the education and maintenance of two hundred and fifty girls of noble descent, but poor parents. In the government and regulation of this admirable charity she found an exceeding pleasure, and her benevolent efforts were powerfully seconded by the liberality of the king. At Saint Cyr she exercised a supreme authority ; regulated the employment of the time and direction of the studies of the boarders ; often dined in their refectory ; visited them when ill ; and sometimes took a favoured pupil to her apartments at Versailles. Her mind, ambitious of power, was delighted with the autocracy of this establishment, where she was reverenced, feared, and obeyed. It was here she spent her last years, after the death of Louis XIV.

This work of charity has benefited her memory, but another event, in 1683, improved her worldly position. We refer to the unexpected death of the queen, Maria Theresa, after three days' illness. Mourning over her corpse—"See the first grief she ever caused me," exclaimed the king, epigrammatically ; but the

sorrow which expends itself in epigrammatic phrases is neither very deep nor very permanent. His regret at first, however, was violently manifested, and we are told that Madame de Maintenon wishing, when all was over, to withdraw to her own apartments, the Duke of La Rochefoucauld caught her by the arm, and drew her towards the king, exclaiming,

“ This is not the time to quit him, Madame ; in such a condition as his, he has need of you.”

Though the death of the queen was destined to gratify Madame de Maintenon’s ambition beyond, probably, her wildest dreams, for nearly a year and a half her position at Court apparently remained unchanged. But the power which she enjoyed was not without its drawbacks. Envy gladly pointed at her as the cause of many of the costly enterprises undertaken by the vanity of Louis, and especially connected her name with the magnificent but useless project of conveying to Versailles the waters of the river Eure. In this great work, however, which cost the country the lives of an army of soldiers and a vast amount of treasure, it does not appear that Madame de Maintenon had any active share. She probably flattered the king with her admiration of an exploit, which she declared “ worthy of him and the Romans ;” but we

do not find that St. Simon is right in attributing to her its conception.

But the time had come when the relations between the king and his "friend" must become more definite. Madame de Maintenon was too calm and reserved to play the part of an Eloisa :—

"Oh! make me mistress of the man I love."

Neither her religious scruples, nor her ambition could be satisfied with the place held by a La Vallière or a De Montespan. Her refusal, however, being based on those grounds of devotion which Louis had learned to respect, did not wound his pride; and he addressed himself to the task of reconciling his desires with her scruples. The death of the queen had left him free to offer her his hand, but he hesitated to replace Maria Theresa by the widow of the buffoon Scarron. Even the absolutism of Louis XIV. shrunk from so bold an experiment on the temper of his people. Nor was Madame de Maintenon more eager than himself that she should occupy a position, which would draw upon her the national hatred without increasing her actual influence. Like most minds that are greedy of power, she cared more for the substance than the show. Whatever hesitancy Louis felt at the last, was removed by the earnest exertions

of Bossuet and the Père de La Chaise, who felt they were serving the cause of the Church in promoting the interests of the Maintenon. A secret marriage was resolved upon, which, while satisfying religion, would not affect the public relations of the parties. Neither openly proclaimed nor absolutely denied, sufficient would be known abroad to silence the tongue of scandal, and yet not enough to arouse public indignation against the parvenu successor of a long line of illustrious women.

Louvois, nevertheless, opposed the alliance with all his might. When the king first made known to him his determination, he exclaimed :

“ Does your majesty mean what you have told me ? The greatest king in the world, and covered with glory, to marry the widow Scarron ! Would you, indeed, dishonour yourself ? ” He threw himself at the king’s feet bathed in tears : “ Pardon me, sire,” he continued, “ pardon the liberty I take. Dismiss me from all my offices, cast me into prison, so that I may not see such an indignity.”

The king said, coldly,

“ Rise. Are you mad ? Have you lost your senses ? ”

“ He rose,” says the Abbé de Choisy, “ and left the royal cabinet, without knowing if his remonstrances had had any effect. But on the morrow, he could see by the embarrassed and

ceremonious air of Madame de Maintenon, that the king had been weak enough to relate everything to her, and from that moment he perceived that she had become his mortal foe."

The secret was so well kept, that the exact date and precise circumstances of this remarkable marriage were never known. It has been ascertained, however, that it was celebrated (probably in 1685\*) in a private oratory at Versailles, by the Archbishop of Paris, that the mass was said by Père de La Chaise, and served by Bontemps, principal valet of the bed-chamber; and that the two witnesses were Monsieur de Montchevreuil, on the part of Madame de Maintenon, and the minister Louvois on the part of the king.

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## VII.

Neither the limits, nor the design of these volumes will permit us to enter into any lengthened explanation of Madame de Maintenon's policy as the wife of Louis XIV. Such an explanation would lead us away from that social life, which it is chiefly our object to

\* Saint Simon says 1684; Voltaire, 1686; but the greater number of authorities adopt the date given in the text.

illustrate, and plunge us into the details of European politics, already the theme of numerous able and profound historians. Nevertheless it will be our duty to indicate the extent of her influence over the king, and the effect which that influence exercised upon the fortunes of France and Europe.

It must be admitted that her position was a difficult one to fill. She was, as Saint Simon says, "in public, a private individual; in private, a queen;" and it proves her possession of no ordinary tact and capacity, that the widely different duties of these widely different characters she discharged with admirable success. To the last day of his life, she preserved her ascendancy over the mind of Louis. To the last of her own life, if she did not escape the attacks of envy and hatred, she commanded the respect of the courtiers and the nation.

No change was made in the external signs of Madame de Maintenon's establishment. No splendid dowry, no numerous household, no gorgeous attire proclaimed the lofty rank to which she had been elevated. Nor did her manners undergo any alteration. The secret consciousness of her greatness never betrayed her into a loftier tone or haughtier mien. "I have seen her," says Saint Simon, "at the king's dinners at Marly, eating with him and *les dames*, and at Fontainebleau in great

state with the Queen of England, and always resigning her place, and making way for ladies of rank, even for distinguished women of quality—never suffering herself to push by the noble, nor even by those of ordinary position, but with an air of civil anxiety and in all these passages appearing polished and affable, speaking like a person who pretended to nothing, and displayed nothing, but was bent upon considering only that which was around her. She herself was always well-dressed, nobly, suitably to her condition, in good taste, but very quietly, and in a more elderly fashion than her age required."

From an able French writer, we borrow an admirable exposition of the relations which, after their marriage, subsisted between the King and Scarron's widow. He does full justice to that marvellous self-command which was the real secret of her influence.

The king was accustomed, he says, to summon to him in the apartment of Madame de Maintenon, during the three or four hours he passed there daily, either one of the secretaries of state, or the controller-general of the finances, and to work there with him. Seated in a corner of the chamber, her hands occupied with the needle, Madame de Maintenon listened in silence, and only opened her mouth after the king had formally invited her. But

this he did sufficiently often, especially when his minister and himself could not agree. "Let us consult *Madame Reason*," he then would say; or else, turning towards her, "what does your Solidity think of it?" We may well believe that her opinion often turned the scales.

Madame de Maintenon's power was that of every wife whose good judgment her husband appreciates, and whom he willingly consults in his affairs. But in her presence was transacted the business of the most powerful monarchy in Europe, and it is easy to understand that the privilege of participating in its direction would make her an object of envy to all the courtiers, and of hatred to many.

This influence, based only on the confidence which she inspired, was established and maintained entirely by her little eagerness to exercise it, by the care which she took to conceal it, and by the antipathy to business which she affected. It was because she never offered her opinion, that Louis XIV. continually demanded it. We must remember the recommendations he gave to his grandson, when he sent him to reign in Spain. "Do not let yourself be governed. Be master! Have no favourite, and no first minister. Consult your councillors, listen, but decide. God who has made you king, will give you the light which you will

need." This last conclusion once admitted, it becomes of little importance whom a king consults. We must also recall what he said to Barbezieux, when he entrusted him with the care of the young Louvois: "I shall form him as I have formed his father."

The pride of power, which was the dominant passion of Louis XIV., was also the source of his strength; and it was the great achievement of Madame de Maintenon that she never allowed the king to doubt his complete security. He never supposed that the calm, indifferent, equable woman whom he had raised to his bed, was as greedy of power as himself; and insensibly exercised an over-mastering influence upon his actions, feelings, and thoughts. While her submissiveness was the attraction which linked him to her, he was in reality overcome by her superior skill; and she ruled—as all clever women do—by the very depth of her obedience.

But, my God! to enjoy this power, what a slavery she was compelled to endure! What a ceaseless round of etiquette wore out heart and brain! What a thraldom was hers, indoors and out of doors, abroad and at home, from morning to night! Accustomed to the most absolute power—to the devotion which is usually offered only to the Divine—Louis required all whom he honoured with his favour to

assimilate their tastes, and pleasures, and wants to his. They must be ready, whatever the state of their health or inclinations, to eat when he ate, to drink when he was thirsty —to hunt, or walk, to play or labour, when he did. Every face in his presence was required to wear a lively expression. Himself of a robust health, he had no pity for the maladies of others, and if they were burning with fever or quivering with ague, they must accompany him to the chase or in his daily promenades. With all her wonderful patience and unequalled self-control, Madame de Maintenon often groaned under the heavy splendour of the yoke; but she reaped her reward in the complete and irresistible ascendancy, which she at length obtained over the mind and heart of the king.

She chiefly used this ascendancy in favour of the Church. Her intellect was clear, but narrow; she could form no broad views of policy, or comprehend the true interests of her country; and conceiving that it was her mission to promote the progress of the “Faith,” she allowed herself to fall into the most grievous errors. She entangled the king in political blunders, which by their results, a century later, became—crimes. In overthrowing the minister Louvois, however, it must be owned that she did a good work. She had never liked him.

A temporary reconciliation prevailed after her marriage; but his anxiety to involve his master in continual wars revolted her calm, cold judgment, and she did not cease to undermine his credit with the king. The ravages committed by the French armies in the Palatinate, in 1688, excited her horror, as they had aroused the indignation of Europe, and she made of them effective use in prejudicing the king against his minister.

A curious illustration of this struggle between the uncrowned queen and the long-tried statesman, we borrow from the picturesque pages of the Duke of Saint-Simon.\*

“Louvois, not content with the terrible executions of the Palatinate, was anxious to burn Trèves. He proposed it to the king, as still more necessary than what had been done at Worms and Spires, which the enemy had made his *dépôts* of arms, for he would make one at Trèves, in a position of greater danger for us. The dispute grew warm, and yet the king was neither able nor willing to be persuaded. We may judge that Madame de Maintenon, afterwards, did not soften matters.

“Some days having passed, Louvois, who

\* The Memoirs of this amusing writer have been ably translated and condensed by the late Bayle St. John. We quote, however, from the original.

had the defect of obstinacy, came to his customary labour with the king in Madame de Maintenon's apartment. At the close of their work he told Louis, that he had clearly perceived that his scrupulousness was the sole reason which held him back from a thing so necessary to his interest, as the burning of Trèves; that he believed he should render him an essential service by taking the act upon himself; and that, therefore, without wishing to re-open the subject with him, he had despatched a courier with the order for Trèves to be burnt immediately on his arrival

“The king was immediately, and contrary to his nature, so transported with rage, that he seized upon the tongs in the chimney, and was about to attack Louvois, when Madame de Maintenon threw herself between the two, and exclaiming, ‘Ah, sire, what would you do?’ took the tongs from his hand. Louvois, meanwhile, gained the door. The king cried after him to come back, and said, with flashing eyes, ‘Despatch a courier immediately with a counter-order, and take heed he arrives in time! If but a single house is burnt, your head shall answer for it!’ Louvois, more dead than alive, retired without delay.”

The hostility between the king's wife and his minister could not long remain a secret, and the allusions to it in Racine's sacred drama of



“Esther,” written at Madame de Maintenon’s instigation, were seized greedily by the courtiers. Louvois figured as *Haman*; *Vashti* was identified with Madame de Montespan; and in *Esther* everybody recognised Madame de Maintenon, who was charmed with the delicate flattery of the poet. Here is a passage or two:—

“Cependant, mon amour pour notre nation  
 A rempli ce palais de filles de Sion,  
 Jeunes et tendres fleurs, par le sort agitées,  
 Sous un ciel étranger comme moi transplantées.  
 Dans un lieu séparé de profanes témoins,  
 Je mets à les former mon étude et mes soins,  
 Et c'est là que, fuyant l'orgueil du diadème,  
 Lasse de vaine honneurs, et me cherchant moi-même,  
 Aux pieds de l’Eternel je viens m’humilier,  
 Et goûter le plaisir de me faire oublier.”

(*Translated.*)

Meanwhile, my love for our dear fatherland  
 Has filled this palace with sweet Zion’s daughters,  
 Young tender flowers, shaken by cruel Fate,  
 Like me, transplanted ‘neath an alien sky.  
 In a sequestered spot, from curious gaze  
 Secluded, I with watchful care and love,  
 Shall nurse their youth, and from the splendid pride  
 Of a queen’s crown retiring, sick of vain  
 And empty honours, searching close my heart,  
 Bend at the feet of the Eternal One,  
 And taste the joy of self-forgetfulness.

In this passage Madame de Maintenon, and  
 VOL I. R

her *protégées* at Saint Cyr, are evidently alluded to. The following lines Louis XIV. might appropriately enough address to his Esther :—

“ Je ne trouve qu'en vous je ne sais quelle grâce  
 Qui me charme toujours, et jamais ne me lasse.  
 De l'aimable vertu doux et puissants attraits !  
 Tout respire en Esther l'innocence et la paix.  
 Du chagrin le plus noir elle écarte les ombres,  
 Et fait des jours sereins de mes jours les plus sombres.”

(*Translated.*)

Only in thee I find the nameless grace  
 Which ne'er fatigues, but owns a constant charm :—  
 Virtue's all-potent and delightful traits !  
 All breathes in Esther innocence and peace ;  
 The blackest clouds of sorrow she dispels,  
 And casts a sunshine o'er the dreariest days.

“ Esther ” and “ Athaliah ” were written by Racine for the pupils of Saint Cyr ; and posterity may thank Madame de Maintenon that the great poet was drawn from his retirement to compose these masterpieces. Owing to an outburst of religious bigotry “ Athaliah ” was never performed at Saint Cyr, but was twice represented at Versailles in the apartments of Madame de Maintenon.

Louvois died suddenly in 1691, and thus escaped the disgrace which Louis had resolved upon. In the same year, and by command of the king, Madame de Montespan retired ; she had long before ceased to enjoy any considera-

tion. It must have been with the keenest mortification that she bade farewell to the scene of so many years of splendour, and we may admit that her vices were not lightly chastised when she was doomed to behold the elevation of her former *protégée* to a position of honour, repute, and influence, which she herself had never enjoyed.

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### VIII.

Of the vast power which she so astutely preserved, Madame de Maintenon made no use to aggrandize and enrich her own family. Her selfishness was totally apart from avarice, and she was not a woman of such strong affections as to dare public comment for the sake of distinguishing her relations. Her brother, whose profligacy and *étourderies* often caused her pain, reached no higher grade in the army than lieutenant-general;\* and the family of Villette obtained but some small and unimportant gifts. For her niece she did most, and her she loved most. She married her to the Duke d'Ayen, the eldest son of her great friend, the Maré-

\* He died in 1703. Before his death he retired into a religious community, and was considered to have repented of the vices of a long life.

chale de Noailles. The bride was then in her fifteenth year (A.D. 1698). In a letter to Madame de Saint-Géran she thus exults in the alliance :—

“ I have established my niece. The thing is done ; therefore make haste, and compliment me quickly. It has cost my brother a hundred thousand francs, me my estate, and the king eight hundred thousand livres ; you see that the gradation has been pretty well observed. Monsieur the Duke de Noailles has given his son a yearly income of twenty thousand livres, and promises him double after his death. The king, who does not know how to do things by halves, gives Monsieur d’Ayen the reversion of his father’s offices. Here is an admirable match ! The marshal will die with joy. His son is wise. He loves the king, and the king loves him. He fears God, and God will bless him. He has a good regiment, and some pensions will be added to it. He loves his profession, and will distinguish himself. In truth, I am very well satisfied with this business. When Mademoiselle d’Aubigné was born, I did not foresee so much happiness. She is well brought up, has more prudence than is usual at her age, has piety, and is rich ; do you think Monsieur de Noailles has made a bad bargain ?”

Her cousin’s daughter, Mademoiselle de Murçay, who had been also educated under her

eye, she wedded to the Marquis de Caylus, and the king gave her a pension of ten thousand livres. We owe to this lady some lively sketches of Madame de Maintenon's career.

We have avoided glancing at political events, for the reign of Louis XIV. could only be pictured on an ampler canvass than we have at our disposal, but we cannot omit a reference to his recognition of the self-exiled James II. as King of England, an event which mainly produced the calamities of later years, and humbled his victorious standards in the dust. Notwithstanding the aggressive policy which Louis had been pursuing, and his evident design to establish the domination of France over Europe, England was ill-disposed for war. William III. was not popular, and his broad and comprehensive policy was not generally understood. But he was the chosen King of England, and when it was known that Louis had dared to recognize the son of James II.—to dictate to the English people whom they should accept as their monarch—there arose a tumult of indignation that only the humiliation of France could in any way appease.

In this unwise and impolitic act Madame de Maintenon had, unfortunately, a large share. Voltaire thus describes the circumstances.

“The day that James II. died, Mary of

Modena, his widow, had an interview with Louis in the apartment of Madame de Maintenon. She conjured him, weeping, not to do such an outrage to her son, to herself, to the memory of the king whom he had protected, as to refuse her son a simple title, the sole relic of so much greatness. The honours due to a prince of Wales had always been paid to her son; he ought then, to be treated as a king after his father's death. Nor could King William complain, provided he was allowed to enjoy his usurpation. She fortified these arguments by an appeal to his interest and glory. Her representations and her tears were supported by Madame de Maintenon. The king returned to his original sentiments, [from which he had been dissuaded by his minister] and the glory of supporting, as far as he could, oppressed kings. Finally, James III. was recognized on the same day that it had been decided in the council his recognition should not take place."

Had the influence of Madame de Maintenon been thrown into the scale against the importunities of Mary of Modena, France might have been spared the humiliation of Blenheim, Ramillies, Oudenarde, and Malplaquet. But James Francis was a Papist, and William III. a Protestant; and bigotry had doubtless a share in the decision which Madame de Maintenon and the king arrived at.

Over the closing years of the protracted reign of Louis it is not our province to linger. They were marked by disaster and shame; beaten armies, captured cities, a heavily taxed and complaining people, an empty treasury, were the sad comments on that policy of aggression which he had so steadily and energetically pursued. The sun which had shone with such meridian splendour, went down in cloud and darkness. In all this misery and humiliation Madame de Maintenon had her portion. The people regarded her with dislike; satires in prose and verse exposed her follies and ridiculed her virtues; anonymous letters contained the bitterest insults; scandal spread everywhere the most atrocious calumnies; only the king remained faithful to his long-tried adviser and beloved friend. She did not display the same generous fidelity towards him; but quitted his death-bed at the last, without waiting to close the dead monarch's eyes.

It was in the month of August, 1715, that the king was seized with a dangerous malady, whose intense agony rapidly reduced his once robust frame. For some weeks he struggled against it perseveringly; attended to affairs of state; affected to conceal it from the public; but he grew weaker daily. Everything foretold his approaching death, and that the crown, which had rested so long upon his brow, must

fall to a grandson whose minority would be protracted. The Duke of Orléans, who, by right of birth and the laws of the realm, should be his regent, was the open adversary of those ideas which Madame de Maintenon had established at Court, and those principles which her influence and example had caused to reign there. His libertinism and irreligion had disturbed the minds of the devout. Madame de Maintenon, moreover, was animated against him by personal griefs, and especially she mistrusted his disposition towards her former pupil, the Duke of Maine, the only individual whom she ever really loved. Louis had caused to be registered by the Parliament, in 1714, an edict which declared his sons by Madame de Montespan heirs of the crown, in default of princes of the blood; and, in 1715, an edict which placed them on an equality of rank with the princes of the blood. These edicts were instigated and approved by Madame de Maintenon. She did more; and to raise the Duke of Maine to a position which might shelter him from the hostility of the Duke of Orléans, she prevailed upon Louis to execute a will which should leave to the Duke only the title of Regent, and reserve the power for a council to be named by him. The same will gave to the Duke of Maine the superintendance of the young king's education, with the care of his person and the command of the

household troops. But Louis did not deceive himself upon the future efficacy of this royal testament. "I was compelled to make it," he said to Mary of Modena, "but as soon as I am dead, it will be worth nothing."

His last illness broke out towards the middle of August, 1715. He had shown, with respect to his will, some casual symptoms of anger against Madame de Maintenon, but all ill-feeling passed away at the approach of death. He remembered only the satisfaction afforded by her friendship for so many years.

"I regret but you," he said to her; "I have not rendered you happy, but all those sentiments of friendship and esteem which you deserve I have invariably cherished. The only thing that grieves me, is quitting you; but I hope soon to see you again."

When his senses failed him, Madame de Maintenon quitted his side, and withdrew to Saint Cyr. He did not expire until the following day, and during this interval she contented herself with the tidings sent to her, hour after hour, by the Marshal de Villeroy. It is difficult to understand this conduct. Did it proceed from her natural selfishness and coldness, or was it the reserve of a deep sorrow, unwilling to expose itself to the observation of the crowd?

At length, on the 1st of September, 1715,

Mademoiselle d'Aumale entered her apartment with the significant words :—“ Madame, everybody is at the church.” She understood ; arose in silence ; repaired to the church ; and listened there to the Office for the Dead. Her grief, to all appearance, was calm and collected.

No disposition in Louis's will provided for her remaining years, but the Duke of Orléans at once and most delicately continued her pension of 48,000 livres. This she mainly expended upon her favourite foundation at Saint Cyr, where she spent the remainder of her life—never faring forth from its tranquil precincts, and receiving but few visitors, and at long intervals.\* Her ambition had expired with Louis XIV. She had shared his glory, his splendour, and his power ; what could she hope from his successor ? Ambition passed away with the means of gratifying it, and religion, as far as her somewhat narrow intellect could comprehend it, enjoyed an undisputed sway over her mind and heart.

The discovery of the conspiracy of Cellamare, which involved the fall and imprisonment of the Duke and Duchess of Maine, severely affected the health of the recluse. It seemed to shatter the links which had held her so closely to life.

\* Amongst these were the Czar Peter, in July, 1717.



Her strength rapidly failed her, and it soon became evident that her end was at hand. She saw it approach with a noble composure. As she shrewdly remarked, Death was the least notable event in her career—a career which had opened in a prison, had sparkled in a palace, and languished to a dreary close in a charitable foundation. She died of no disease, but, as Fontenelle said of himself, *of the great difficulty of living!* Her life went out like the flickering flame of a slowly-wasting torch. To the last her intellect asserted its supremacy over the body. A few minutes before her death she exclaimed to her old friend, the Duke of Noailles:—“Adieu, my dear Duke! Some short hours more, and I shall be on the point of learning the mystery of things.” She began that mysterious and eternal study on the 18th of April, 1719.

She was buried in the church of Saint Cyr, and a stately tomb enshrined her remains. But during the fierce tempests of the French Revolution the church was destroyed, and the tomb perished. Saint Cyr is now a military school, and a chapel is attached to it for the use of its pupils. In a corner of that chapel a tablet of black marble will assuredly attract the gaze of the most cursory observer, for its inscription, though brief, is pregnant with thought and

emotion. Thus runs the legend—thus, and no more:—

ci gît  
Madame De Maintenon.  
1635-1719.

What more striking comment would you have on the history of a remarkable life?

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*Authorities* :—*Histoire de Madame de Maintenon*, par Hequet ; *Madame de Maintenon, Siècle de sa Vie et ses Lettres*, par La Beaumelle ; *Louis Quatorze*, par Voltaire ; *Life of Louis XIV*, by James ; *Mémoires de la Maréchale de Créqui* ; *Mémoires du Cardinal Dubois* ; *Lettres de Madame de Sévigné* ; *Mémoires du Duc de St. Simon*, &c.



GABRIELLE D'ESTREES  
DUCHESS DE BEAUFORT,

A.D. 1576.



GABRIELLE D'ESTREES,  
DUCHESS OF BEAUFORT.

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“Ce ne sont pas des yeux, ce sont plutôt des dieux,  
Ils ont dessus les rois la puissance absolue.  
Dieux! Non, ce sont des cieux, ils ont la couleur bleue!  
Et le mouvement prompt, comme celui des cieux.”

PORCHERO, *in Les Muses Françoises.*

GABRIELLE D'ESTRÉES, the most famous of the beauties of France, and whose renown is inseparably associated with the glory of the most popular of the French monarchs, was born at the Château de Cœuvres, near Soissons, in the year 1576. Her father was a gallant soldier, who had deserved well of his country—Antoine d'Estreés, Marquis de Cœuvres. Her mother, Françoise Babou de La Bourdaisière, was the grand-daughter of the illustrious Florimond Robertel, secretary of state, in the reign of

Henry II. At an early age, Gabrielle gave promise of a remarkable beauty, when time should have developed the fair proportions, rounded the slender figure, and lent expression to the radiant face. Though her mother was notorious for the looseness of her life, the daughter showed a high sense of purity and religion, and her reserve was the despair of all the young nobles in her neighbourhood. She reached the age of seventeen without knowing what it was to love, and her heart was as innocent as her loveliness was without blemish.

Shortly after the accession of Henri Quatre to his precarious throne, he despatched on a mission to Monsieur d'Estrées the first gentleman of his chamber, the handsome and accomplished Duke de Bellegarde. This brilliant courtier gazed with wonder on the beauty so long concealed in the obscurity of a feudal castle. Her tresses glowed with burnished gold ; her blue eyes sparkled with a dazzling fire ; her complexion was radiantly fair ; her nose well shaped and aquiline. Her mouth was well filled with pearly teeth, and her lips resembled the all-compelling bow of the God of Love. A stately throat, a gently-swelling bust, a rounded arm and slender hand, these completed the charms which a fascinating address and natural elegance of movement rendered still more irresistible.



Bellegarde saw, and loved; nor was his evident devotion unpleasing to Mademoiselle d'Estrées, who had never before encountered a cavalier so handsome, so gallant, and so chivalrous. The course of true love seemed with this fortunate twain to run most smoothly, for though Gabrielle had been betrothed from her childhood to André de Brancas, Sieur de Villars—brother of the Marquis de Villars who had married her elder sister Juliette—the Marquis de Cœuvres could not resist his daughter's entreaties, and consented to affiance her to the Duke de Bellegarde. He was not, indeed, insensible to the advantages of an alliance with a noble so powerful and wealthy, and who stood so high in the favour of King Henry. The lovers exchanged rings in his presence; the Duke presented his lady-love with his portrait; and then returned to his duties at court, where his engagement to an unknown beauty excited great astonishment.

At this time Henri Quatre was holding his court at Mantes, and relieving the sterner toils of empire by sharing in the banquet and the song. The dames and demoiselles of Mantes were often the theme of the merry talk of the jocund monarch and his courtiers, and much surprise was expressed at the indifference with which the Duke de Bellegarde conducted himself among them. They could not con-

ceive that a country maiden could be any worthy rival of the dazzling *dames de la cour*. The Duke replied that not one of these could hope to equal *la dame de ses pensées*, the beautiful Gabrielle d'Estrées. Henry laughed at the lover's infatuation. Bellegarde, piqued at his incredulity, invited him to accompany him to the Château de Cœuvres, and with his own eyes determine whether he used the language of exaggeration. The king promised; and thus, as Mademoiselle de Guise sagely observes, "the hopeless lover became the artificer of his own misfortunes;" for it was due to that ill-omened visit that he perilled his happiness and lost the favour of the king.

Shortly afterwards, the king and Bellegarde being in the neighbourhood of Senlis, the latter solicited the royal permission to visit his betrothed at Cœuvres. The request produced a fresh outbreak of Henry's railery, and the vaunting lover, though well acquainted with the monarch's amorous disposition, again urged him to see for himself whether the beauty of Mademoiselle Gabrielle might not claim the most fervent idolatry. As the château was situated at no great distance from Senlis, Henry consented; and king and courtier mounted their horses and rode hastily forward. Henry was received with the welcome due to so brave

a king ; and the beautiful Gabrielle did homage to him by kissing his hand, and proffered the wine-cup for his refreshment. Her loveliness burst upon the astonished monarch, as the glories of the new world broke on the dazzled eyes of Columbus. Fresh, and pure, and unsophisticated it took captive the royal heart, and the memories of all former loves paled before the fervency of this new passion. On taking his leave the king's looks showed how powerfully he was moved, and when he commanded the Marquis to bring his fair daughter to the court at Mantes, the Duke de Bellegarde probably regretted that he had pressed so susceptible a monarch to accompany him on a visit to his *fiancée*.

“ His Majesty, attended by Bellegarde,” says Miss Freer, “ returned to Senlis in very pensive mood ; from whence he proceeded to Mantes, where affairs demanded his presence. From that period, the king constantly sent to compliment and to enquire after the health of Mademoiselle d'Estrées ; never, it was observed, selecting Monsieur de Bellegarde as his messenger. The admiration so vividly demonstrated by King Henry did not, however, shake the allegiance of Gabrielle towards her betrothed, to whom she was sincerely attached. The Duke's matrimonial proposals, to which so many ladies aspired, flattered the ambition

of Mademoiselle d'Estrées. His great wealth and handsome person gratified her vanity ; and, to quote her own words, 'she desired no better fortune than to become the wife of Monsieur de Bellegarde.'

For a time, Henry was recalled from his dreams of love and beauty by the perplexities of his position, and in his military operations against the leaders of the League forgot, or seemed to forget, Gabrielle d'Estrées. That fascinating lady was, meanwhile, beset by another lover, the Duke de Longueville, who, having been sent by Henry on a financial mission to Mantes, had seen and been conquered. *Venit, vidit, victus est.* The offer of his hand was regarded with favour by her father, for he was a prince of the royal blood, and hereditary lord high chamberlain of France ; but the Marquis declined to put any pressure on his daughter's inclinations, and Gabrielle elected to remain faithful to Bellegarde. She opened, however, a platonic correspondence with Longueville, recording for him the scandal of Mantes, while he retailed the *on dits* of the royal court ; nor did she fear to indulge in numerous jests and epigrams upon the notorious weaknesses of King Henry, whom she nicknamed, "the king with the grizzled beard"—(*sa Majesté à la barbe grise.*)

In September 1690, the king dispersed his



victorious army in various provinces, and prepared, after an arduous campaign, to enjoy an interval of repose. He retired to Senlis, and summoned thither the Marquis de Cœuvres and his daughter, under pretext that the Marquis might take his oaths as a member of the royal council. The summons was most unacceptable to Gabrielle, who complained bitterly that Henry's attentions sullied her maiden-fame, while she grieved at the popular rumour that her lover Bellegarde had been ensnared by the charms of Mademoiselle de Guise. On her arrival at Senlis, she offered Bellegarde to consent to a private marriage as the only means of evading "the evil designs of his Majesty;" but the Duke was not chivalrous enough to dare the royal wrath. Nevertheless, she continued constant in her affection, avoided all private converse with the king, behaved towards Bellegarde on all occasions as her affianced husband, returned Henry's presents, and even implored him to expedite her union with her lover. This obstinate resistance served but to inflame the passion of Henri Quatre, who was always too ready to break through the restraints of kingly honour and manly virtue, when spell-bound by the enchantment of female beauty. He called the Duke de Bellegarde into his cabinet, and commanded him at once to renounce his claims to

the hand of Mademoiselle d'Estrées. " You know that I love her," he exclaimed, " and I warn you not to cross my path. Neither in war, politics, nor love will I suffer a rival. Heed my words!" The Duke saw that there was no alternative but obedience, and promised to quit Senlis without delay.

In vain the fair Gabrielle broke into tears and lamentations, and " cursed the form that pleased a king;" in vain her father respectfully represented to Henry the injury inflicted on his daughter by the rupture of so desirable an alliance. The king persisted in demanding Bellegarde's submission. He visited the beauty in the hope of soothing her disappointment and moderating her anger, but she wept continually, and flinging herself on her knees implored him to restore to her side her affianced husband. When she found him immovable, she rose, and abruptly left the apartment, and during the night quitted Senlis, and returned to her father's castle. Nor did she give any heed to the letters of recall despatched on the following day by the impatient Henry and the Marquis de Cœuvres.

King Henry was deeply affected by her flight, and vented his anger in bitter reproaches against her father. It is believed that he now made known to Monsieur d'Estrées his projects relative to the beautiful Gabrielle, as henceforth



the Marquis steadily repulsed every suitor for her hand.

But it is not given to kings to dally for ever in "Paphian bowers," and Henry was summoned from his amorous attractions by the progress of the enemy's forces, under the celebrated Alexander Farnese, the greatest captain of his age. Henry quitted Senlis, and repaired to Chaumont, harassing the Spaniards by the celerity of his movements. He afterwards joined his principal officers at La Fère, where they awaited him with reinforcements.

It was at this epoch that he determined on the most romantic and adventurous passage in his romantic and adventurous life. The Château de Cœuvres was twenty-four miles from La Fère; the intervening country was thronged with bands of marauders, and Soissons was garrisoned by the League. Yet, in spite of these dangers, Henry resolved upon a visit to the obdurate beauty, whose flight from Senlis had caused him such bitter sorrow. To his ardent letters Gabrielle had vouchsafed no reply. He trusted she would relent to his sighs and prayers. Her resistance deepened the passion which her loveliness had lighted up, and he was determined to shake her resolution by an act of devotion and a deed of daring worthier of a paladin than a king. His courtiers were amazed at his rashness, but their words of warning

were unheeded. At the risk of his crown, his kingdom, and his life, he determined upon imploring his pardon, kneeling at the feet of La Belle Gabrielle.

He set out from La Fère, early in the dim misty morning of the 18th of November, accompanied by twelve cavaliers, among whom were the trusty Givry, Rosny, and Biron. Biron rode forwards to announce to Mademoiselle d'Estrées the approaching visit of the king, whom he was afterwards to return to meet, and guide to the château. At a little village about nine miles from Cœuvres, Henry quitted his attendants, and prosecuted his journey on foot, in the disguise of a peasant which Biron had left for his use at a wayside inn. To complete the transformation, he carried a sack of straw on his head. Certainly, never since the days of myth and fable, did love effect a more wonderful metamorphosis !

It was difficult for even the invincible Gabrielle to resist so surprising a proof of her royal lover's devotion. As Voltaire says :

“ Contre un pouvoir si grand qu'eut pu faire d'Estrées ?  
Par une charme indomptable elle était attirée ;  
Elle avait à combattre, en ce funeste jour,  
Sa jeunesse, son cœur, un héros, et l'amour !”

*English.*

“ How could the maid resist a power so great ?  
Spell-bound, she sank, by a resistless fate ;



Call'd, on that day of doom, to bear her part  
'Gainst youth, a hero, love, and her own heart!"

She did not allow herself, however, to succumb too quickly. Accompanied by her sister, Madame de Villars, a woman of ambitious spirit and intriguing disposition, she received the king in a low gallery which opened on a balcony, reached from the garden by a flight of steps. The reception was "cold and ungracious." Mademoiselle professed to be disgusted with the coarse rude garb assumed by the royal adventurer to disguise his person. "It gave him," she said, "so ridiculous an aspect that she could not look at him without laughing." She had nothing to say to him; and with a saucy smile and a frowning brow, she left the gallery. But a few minutes afterwards she returned, and offered him some refreshment. The king took from her hands a cup of wine and a slice of bread, but refused other viands. A brief conversation followed, in which a visible relenting on the part of the flattered beauty so cheered the enamoured Henry, that on taking leave, he said to Madame de Villars, "I have now a good heart that nothing will go wrong with me, but all things prosper. I am going to pursue the enemy, and in a day or two *ma belle* will hear what gallant exploits I have accomplished for love of her."

It was at this interview, according to the so-

called *Mémoires de la Belle Gabrielle*, that Henri Quatre related to Gabrielle the story of his first love—a narrative not ill-calculated to influence a woman's heart. The reader will not, perhaps, be indisposed to linger for a few minutes over the episode, though it may interrupt the flow of our biographical summary.

#### FLEURETTE AND HENRI QUATRE.

They were seated round the winter-fire—the gallant king of the snow-white plume, the beautiful Gabrielle, Madame de Villars, and the impetuous Biron. Henry sat somewhat in the shadow, and occasionally ventured to take the hand of the *dame de ses pensées*. Ah ! with what a deep, soft lustre shone her eloquent eyes, and how rare a rose bloomed upon each tender cheek!.... Those blue eyes, that fair cheek, not yet forgotten by the heart of romantic France! Not yet forgotten: die out all the old traditions—wane away into the darkness all the legends once forming the faith of a people—vanish into the dim shadow a nation's dearest, proudest, loftiest associations; but for ever lives, undimmed and unforgotten, the fame of a wondrous beauty and a true love. So the charms of Gabrielle still bloom in tale and song, and all France remembers her fond and faithful heart; and even now, to the poet's fancy,



her eloquent eyes are full of light, and a rose is still upon her tender cheeks !

The conversation had gradually passed from light and graceful persiflage—as is often the case when the heart throbs with deep meanings and gentle fancies—into earnest talk, and the faces both of the king and beauty wore a thoughtful and elevated expression. The fire-light shot athwart the hall in fitful flashes, and flung grotesquely moving shadows upon the quaintly-decorated arras. And the November wind came southing over the wide and dreary moorlands, with many a tale of perilous seas and lands of bleakest desolation, and stole in sorrowful gusts through the chinks and crannies of the clattering casements. And the night deepened into an oppressive gloom ; and a sense of the silence and agony of the darkness penetrated the hearts of all.

“ Nay, nay,” cried the king, in sudden reply to Gabrielle’s whispered doubts, “ never, never did I love as I love now !” and then checking himself, he continued, with a sigh, “ never—but *once*.”

“ And then, sire,” exclaimed Gabrielle, “ it was your *first* love, and the lady of your heart was named Fleurette.”

“ Thou hast spoken truly, *m’amie*,” replied the king ; “ and she still lives in my memory—poor Fleurette !”

“Tell us her history, sire,” continued Gabrielle; “I would fain know by heart a romance so tender and so true.”

“But thou wilt teach me to forget even Fleurette;” and he pressed her hand with a lover’s fervour. “Let us not meddle with so sad a tale. Let the dead rest in peace!”

“But I would wish to know,” rejoined Gabrielle, softly, and with a warm quick blush, “whether Fleurette could love like Gabrielle.”

“Ah, *belle amie*, I can refuse thee nothing. My friends, listen to my tale, if ye will, and treasure it up in your hearts, if ye can, but whisper it not into other ears; respect the secrets of a king.”

His attendants eagerly assured him that not a word should escape their constant lips. But the fair Gabrielle made no such promise, or if she did, she forgot to keep it; and consequently the present writer is enabled to tell his readers, nearly in Henry’s own language, the Tale of the King’s First Love.

“I was but thirteen years old,” commenced the king, “and I had been educated at Paris with a superabundance of care, by an erudite preceptor, named La Gaucherie, who had always on his lips the admirable moral quatrains of Pibrac, and hurled them at me every moment with no despicable skill. He hated wo-

men with the utmost singleness of spirit ; modestly blushed when compelled to address them, obdurately closed his eyes rather than look upon them, and could only comprehend the symmetry of Latin hexameters, or the beauty of sparkling Alcaics ! With his pupil, however, no such prejudice existed. Petted by the ladies of the Court, flattered with easy kisses, smiled upon by gracious eyes, it is not wonderful that I became a man before I had grown out of boyhood. On one occasion, however, when I was toying with a fair girl named Aminta, I was surprised by the sudden entrance of La Gaucherie. The good man shut his eyes, and quoted Pibrac ; but an hour afterwards I was on my way to Nérac, in his austere company, and with moral platitudes ringing in my jaded ears.

“ At Nérac, however, I soon learned to forget the syrens of the Court ; and the April glories of the earth furnished me with an endless store of sweet thoughts and gentle fancies. With how light a ripple sparkled the stream through the leafy recesses of the wood !—with how genial a smile the glowing heavens looked upon the lusty vigour of the trees ! How in every croft and combe laughed the flowers !—how the melody of happy birds floated upon the murmurous wind ! I was never weary of studying the changing loveliness of Nature—never weary

of listening to the wondrous variations of her glorious music. Something of the poetry which lived, and breathed, and shone around me, stole into my youthful heart, and I looked back with disgust to the hours of empty dalliance wasted at the feet of liberal beauties.

“Now, it chanced that, one day, when I was walking with my tutor in the umbrageous solitudes of the wood—long vistas of pine and oak, tremulous with sunshine, and resonant with song—a butterfly of a rare species attracted my attention and I began a vigorous pursuit. As I sped onward, the sonorous voice of my pedagogue rolled after me a quatrain of Pibrac's:—

“‘Ah, happy we, who far from those that smile  
And fawn in gilded palace-splendours, live;  
Releas'd from anxious throbs and courtly guile,  
Blest with the joys which brooks and blossoms give !’

“But I soon escaped from his monotonous philosophy, and lost sight of him altogether. Under the green leaves, and over the soft turf, I still pursued my butterfly, when, suddenly, I discovered in the distance a young girl—apparently beautiful—who was loading her lap with wood-violets. She soon perceived my approach, and, like a timid fawn, took flight, heeding neither my cries nor prayers, until checked by a rapid stream which sparkled and shimmered among the thick long fern. Then

I overtook her, and immediately flinging my arms around her, I embraced her with ardour. She wept a little at first, but soon broke into laughter—and, ah, her laughter was divine! In my enchantment I almost forgot to notice that this sweet nymph of the wood, this fair and gentle Oread, was clad in a peasant's dress.

“ ‘My love, my life!’ I cried, with sudden passion, looking straight into her earnest eyes, and clasping her slender hands; ‘tell me thy name!’

“ ‘My lord,’ she replied, ‘my name is Fleurette; and I am the daughter of the gardener of the château.’

“ ‘Darling, wilt thou love me if I love thee?’

“ ‘I may not. I am of too low a birth—for you, I am sure of it, are a great prince.’

“ ‘Ah, little one, that difficulty is easily surmounted. I will call thee *Madam*, and thou wilt call me *Sir*!’

“ ‘Or rather, my lord, call me Fleurette, and I will call thee——’

“ ‘Henry, if the name please thee.’

“ ‘I dare not presume.’

“ ‘Dare, dare, Fleurette! and Heaven knows how I shall love thee.’

“ ‘Ah, Henry!’ and as she murmured my name, a blush stole over brow, and cheek, and

bosom, like the rose-tint on the Alpine snow,  
'I wish I might dare to love thee as—as—I do.'

" 'Look, Fleurette !' I interrupted her, ' yonder comes my preceptor, and I would not that he should see us together. To-morrow, *ma plus chère*, at early dawn, meet me here, in this delightful nook—of all places the most agreeable to thy Henry, for here he saw thee first.'

" 'Farewell, my lord. I will not fail thee on the morrow.'

" 'Farewell, beautiful Fleurette ! remember—remember that I love thee !'

" I hastily pressed my lips to hers, and gliding through a thick and leafy copse, knelt down in the pleasant shadow. La Gaucherie approached, and seeing Fleurette seated on the brink of the crystal rivulet, shrewdly guessed where I had been delayed.

" 'Child,' he cried, 'have you seen the little prince in this direction ?'

" 'No, indeed,' replied Fleurette ; 'besides, I have not stirred from the spot where I am now sitting.'

" 'Ah, my daughter,' said La Gaucherie, with uplifted finger and a grave brow, 'falsehood is the father of all the vices, just as idleness is their mother. When you gloss over the truth, be more ashamed of yourself than of others.'

" 'Nay, sir, do not chide me,' interrupted

Fleurette, with a smiling lip and a sparkling eye.

“ ‘ I do not, my daughter, but I would warn you :—

“ ‘ Seek not to grasp at what thou can’t not hold,  
Nor with high honours grapple, over-bold !’

“ ‘ Monsieur de La Gaucherie,’ said I suddenly making my appearance, much to the worthy pedagogue’s discomfiture, ‘ what moralities have you been dinning into Fleurette’s ears, while I have been exploring these pleasant glades ?’

“ ‘ Ha, ha !’ retorted he ; ‘ you know, then, that her name is Fleurette ? You must certainly have the gift of divination.’

“ I blushed deeply at my unlucky inadventure.

“ ‘ Well, sir,’ I replied, ‘ I admit that you never whispered such a name in the whole course of my studies.’

“ ‘ It was only to-day, your Highness,’ rejoined my tutor, ‘ that I quoted to you a quatrain felicitously applicable at the present moment :—

“ ‘ To hate the truth, to love deceit,  
And wilfully the simple cheat ;  
To spread abroad each false report,  
These are the virtues of a court.’

"Without waiting for a further dose of Pibrac's rhymes, I returned to the château; and Fleurette, imitating my example, sped away to her father's cottage. La Gaucherie remained, to bestow his dull platitudes upon the trout in the river.

"On the morrow, after a night of delicious dreams, in which Fleurette conspicuously figured, the rays of the sun gliding through the lattice warned me that the tryst-hour had arrived; and long before La Gaucherie had awoke to Pibrac and philosophy, I had reached the banks of the stream and the leafy bower where I had hidden myself on the previous evening. I waited some time for the coming of Fleurette, until doubt and disappointment moved me even to tears. But as I was on the point of returning, heart-broken and sorrowful, the peasant-beauty appeared. I flew to meet her; with tears and sighs I clasped her to my heart, and kissed her again and again. Then I made her sit down on the blossomy turf, and seated myself beside her. I perceived that her eyes were red with weeping, and anxiously enquired,

" 'What, Fleurette! are you not pleased to see me?'

" 'Oh, yes, Henry,' she replied; 'but I have been thinking over the wise sayings of your tutor, and it seems to me that I am weak and foolish to love one so much above me in rank

and station, and that it is madness for you to love so poor a girl as I.'

" 'Thou shalt think otherwise, my love, my life, when thou seest how boundless is my devotion.'

" 'You may love me for awhile, Henry, but you will soon weary of me, and then—and then—I shall die !'

" 'Fleurette,' I exclaimed, 'I love thee so passionately that when I am a crowned king, thou shalt be my queen.'

" 'Oh, no ! Let me remain the peasant-girl, the daughter of the gardener of your château, so that you do but love me.'

" 'I have heard, my sweetheart, that vows consecrated by the holy name of God can never be broken ; hear me, then, swear by the great God that my love shall only end with my life.'

" 'I believe in you ; and as for me, I—but remember, Henry, if ever, for three days at a time, I do not see you, I shall know you are perjured, faithless, false !'

" 'And thinking me so; what would you do, Fleurette ?'

" 'Henry,' she said, with a grave, sad voice, still ringing in my ears, 'the bright stream which now so faithfully glasses our loving forms shall console me with a swift death !'

" 'It is agreed, then,' I exclaimed, in all the eagerness of a love which I felt to be undying,

'the absence of either of us for three days shall be accepted as a sign of a broken troth.'

"And from that happy moment we met, day after day, and dreamed and loved. We felt no fear of La Gaucherie, who had forgotten the existence of Fleurette. April passed away, and the genial May reigned queen-like over the blessed earth, and still, at morning and at evening, hand clasped in hand, we roamed the woods together.

"And then a cloud came over our heaven, and sorrow stole into our Arcady of love and innocence. One morning, when I met my woodland-beauty, I saw that she had been weeping.

"'Why dost thou weep, my life?' I said, and tenderly kissed her. 'See, I laugh with glee this morning at the soft pressure of thy lips—ruddier and fresher than the rose close-nestling to thy breast!'

"'Henry,' said she, mournfully, 'this rose to-morrow will be dry and withered; nevertheless, I pray thee, preserve it as a *souvenir* of our love and happiness.'

"'Dearer to me than the relic of ever a saint,' I cried, 'it has been warmed by thy tender bosom! But what is it grieves thee, Fleurette?'

"'I dreamed, Henry, of the dark slimy

waters of a desolate swamp—a certain sign of death, my Henry.'

" 'Sweetheart,' I replied, 'put to flight such gloomy fancies, they are truly the vapours of hell. And believe, that if thou diest, I will as speedily follow thee, I could not live without Fleurette.'

" 'Nay, I beseech thee to live, my Henry, for one day thou wilt be a king—a mighty sovereign; and for the strong hand and the ready brain there will be work to do which must be done.'

" It is said that the Future reveals itself to those who stand upon the dark threshold of the Eternal. There was a something in Fleurette's words which shot, arrow-like, to my heart, with a conviction of their truth, and I could not reply to her. I fell into a passion of weeping. A presentiment of approaching evil weighed heavily upon my soul; and thus, with sighs and tears, and sorrowful embraces, passed our trysting-hour. *It was the last!*

" 'To-morrow, Henry,' she cried, as we parted.

" 'To-morrow, Fleurette,' I replied, 'to-morrow.'

" That evening I was seized with a violent fever, and before morning I became delirious. The leech was summoned, and all the resources of his skill were scarcely sufficient to save my

life. Still the memory of Fleurette was strong upon my brain, and I begged of those around me to warn me of her condition. They treated my incoherent speeches as the delusions of a madman. Alas! alas! What cared they for a peasant's daughter? What did they know of Fleurette's love for Henry? They soothed me with soft words, but heeded not my prayers nor obeyed my commands.

“Fleurette, when the three days had elapsed, called at the château to gain some tidings of her Henry. The servants laughed at what they thought her audacity, and falsely told her that I had set out for Paris.

“‘Be it so,’ she replied, ‘dreams, then, *are* warnings from on high of events about to happen. I have waited the three days, and *now!*’—

“Then, half running, half walking, she glided through the gardens of the château, and entered the wood.

“At that moment I was seized in my bed with a strange paroxysm. I moved to and fro as one who struggles against the tide, until, exhausted by the violence of my motions, I fell back and fainted.

“The next day, when La Gaucherie had temporarily withdrawn from my bedside, I rose hastily, and, though pale with weakness, and trembling violently, contrived to dress myself.

I traversed with a swift foot the corridors of the château, descended the stairs, opened the garden door, crossed the garden, and still undiscovered, made my way into the wood. From afar off I heard the brawling of the brook which guided my steps to the trysting-tree, where I had carved Fleurette's beloved name, and whose branches had so often rained down green leaves upon us as we sat beneath, and dreamed of love. I looked around for Fleurette, but looked in vain. I cried aloud, 'Where art thou, Fleurette?' but no sweet voice replied. Suddenly, my weeping eyes perceived, floating on the surface of the water, and in the shadow of a mournful cypress, a dead body! My heart throbbed, my limbs shook. I drew anear—I recognised the face of Fleurette—and I remember no more, until I woke to consciousness in the arms of my poor tutor, who missing me from my bed-room, and guessing whither my steps would be directed, had followed me swiftly to find me lying insensible on the river bank.

"It was some weeks before I recovered, but when strong enough to bear an allusion to the sorrowful incident, I found that La Gaucherie had caused my poor village-love to be interred in a decent grave. A stone marks the spot, and is inscribed 'Faithful unto Death!' And such was the fate of my First Love. It is for

you, *ma belle* Gabrielle, to teach me to forget her."

The king's visit to the Château de Cœuvres was not attended with any disastrous consequences. He returned to La Fère in safety, burning to perform some "mighty feat of arms," which should deepen the favourable impression he flattered himself he had made on the heart of Mademoiselle d'Estrées. His devotion to that lady was now well-known all over France, from Provence to Normandy, and Ardennes to the Pyrenees; and her maiden fame was irretrievably sullied, for men had not that confidence in woman's virtue as to believe she had proved inflexible to the addresses of a king. Her father, therefore, determined to "save her honour," by a method not unusual in those days, however unsatisfactory it might be considered at present. He chose a husband for his daughter, and intimated that no option would be allowed her. This was one Monsieur de Liancourt, who was many years her senior, and a widower with nine children, wealthy, ignorant, weak in mind, and disagreeable in person. In vain Gabrielle appealed to the king against a marriage which was little better than "a living death." Henry was well-pleased with an event which, he foresaw, would vanquish the Beauty's last lingering reluctance, and replied, that "as

yet his sceptre was not potent enough to enable him to interfere authoritatively in the private affairs of such subjects as Estrées and Liancourt ; but on her slightest command, he gave her the word of a king, he would cause her to be carried away to a place of safety within one hour after the celebration of her espousals with M. de Liancourt.” Gabrielle was vanquished, and consented. Her marriage took place at Cœuvres, in January 1591, and she made her preparations to escape immediately from the bridegroom she loathed to the gallant Henry. But the king had been imperiously called away from the dreams and hopes of love to the cares of his troubled kingdom, and had made a bold attempt to surprise and capture rebellious Paris. Frustrated in this enterprise by the unexpected caution of his adversaries, he returned to Senlis, and from thence repaired to Chauny, where a letter of passionate entreaty from Madame de Liancourt roused him to instant action.

“ He accordingly,” says Miss Freer, “ despatched a mandate commanding Monsieur de Liancourt to join the camp at Chauny, and to bring his wife. Not a day of grace was conceded ; even the very hour when he was to enter the presence is stated to have been indicated by the missive. The tears and threats of his reluctant bride, and her undisguised hatred and contempt, had rendered the few days which

Monsieur de Liancourt passed in her society, the reverse of halcyon. He, therefore, yielded obedience to a mandate which he dared not dispute, and repaired to Chauny. The following day, a royal order exiled Monsieur de Liancourt from court, and indicated as his future residence a castle which appertained to him in Limousin, to which he departed without being permitted even a parting interview with his wife."

Henceforth, Gabrielle reigned supreme in the heart of Henri Quatre, influencing his councils by her wit and judgment, as she had excited his passions by her grace and beauty. She was treated with the reverence due to a queen, and, indeed, from this time to the day of her death, she never ceased to struggle and intrigue for a share of Henry's throne. She ruled the king absolutely, and eclipsed by her surprising loveliness every other lady of the court. Her presence and power in the royal household were not favourable, however, to the morality of France. The vices of kings are the punishment of nations, and a low standard both of morals and manners, was accepted by all classes, in view of their sovereign's open disregard of the marriage vow.

In the summer of 1592, Henry was compelled to make a campaign in Picardy, which necessitated his parting for a season with his imperious mistress. She remained at Mantes under the guardianship of Monsieur de Rosny,

better known to English readers as the Duke of Sully. The king's grief at quitting her gave rise to numerous odes, songs, and epigrams, in which the royal lover was not always treated with the greatest reverence. But a lyric, written by Du Perron, Bishop of Evreux,\* and sent to Madame de Liancourt with Henry's endorsement—"Ces vers," he wrote, "vous représenteront mieux ma condition; et plus agréablement que ne ferait la prose,"—is still favourably regarded, having carried into the obscurest village of France the fame of Henry's love for **LA CHARMANTE GABRIELLE**. We append the original, and a rough version in English rhyme :

**LES ADIEUX DU ROI À MADAME GABRIELLE.**

Charmante Gabrielle !  
 Percé de mille dards,  
 Quand la gloire m'appelle  
 Sous les drapeaux de Mars.

Cruelle departye,  
 Malheureux jour !  
 Que ne suis-je sans vie  
 Ou sans amour !

L'amour sans nulle peine  
 M'a par vos doux regards  
 Comme un grand capitaine  
 Mis sous ses étendards.

---

\* It has also been ascribed to Bertaut, Bishop of Séez, and was set to music by Ducauroy, composer to Charles II, for a Christmas carol.

Cruelle departye,  
Malheureux jour !  
Que ne suis-je sans vie  
Ou sans amour !

Partager ma couronne,  
Le prix de ma valeur,  
Je la tiens de Bellone,  
Tenez la de mon cœur,  
Cruelle departye,  
Malheureux jour !  
Que ne suis-je sans vie  
Ou sans amour ?

*(Translated.)*

Charming Gabrielle,  
Pierc'd with arrowy rays,  
Glory summons me  
Where Mars his flag displays.

Ah, cruel adieux !  
Ah, fatal hour !  
Better die than live  
Without love's power !

E'er, by your glances bright,  
Love without pain will hold  
Me, like a gallant knight,  
Beneath his flag enroll'd.

Ah, cruel adieu !  
Ah, fatal hour !  
Better die than live  
Without love's pow'r.

Thou, love, shalt share my crown,  
The trophy of my sword ;  
I hold it from red War,  
Thou hold it from thy lord.

Ah, cruel adieu !  
 Ah, fatal hour !  
 Better die than live  
 Without love's pow'r.

Another version of this popular ballad, which occurs in the *Mémoires de la Belle Gabrielle*, attributed to herself, runs as follows : —

Charmante Gabrielle,  
 Regnez avecque moi  
 Quand mon Paris rebelle  
 Se soumet à ma loi.  
 O ma reine chérie,  
 En ce beau jour,  
 Mieux vaut être sans vie  
 Que sans amour !

Je n'ai pu dans la guerre  
 Qu'un royaume gagner,  
 Mais sur toute la terre  
 Vos yeux doivent régner.  
 O ma reine chérie, &c.

L'amour sans nulle peine  
 M'a par vos doux regards,  
 Comme un grand capitaine  
 Mis sous vos étendards.  
 O ma reine chérie, &c.

Si votre nom célèbre  
 Sur mes drapeaux était  
 Jusques au bord de l'Ebre  
 L'Espagne me craindait.  
 O ma reine chérie, &c.

(*Translated.*)

Charming Gabrielle,  
 Thou shalt share my throne  
 When rebellious Paris  
 Shall my sceptre own.  
 O my dearest queen,  
 In that bright hour,  
 'Twere better die than live  
 Without love's pow'r.

My sword a single realm  
 For me can hardly gain,  
 But o'er a subject world  
 Thine eyes must surely reign!  
 O my dearest queen, &c.

E'er, by your glances bright,  
 Love without pain will hold  
 Me, like a gallant knight,  
 Beneath his flag enroll'd.  
 O my dearest queen, &c.

Did but thy glorious name  
 Upon my banner gleam,  
 Proud Spain should quake with fear  
 Even to Ebro's stream.  
 O my dearest queen, &c.

We may here, perhaps, be permitted to introduce another poetical celebration of Gabrielle's surpassing charms, which, in the *Mémoires* already referred to, is ascribed to no less a minstrel than Henri Quatre himself. This is the royal lyric :—

Viens, Aurore,  
 Je t'implore,  
 Je suis gai quand je te voi ;  
 La bergère  
 Qui m'est chère  
 Est vermeille ainsi que toi.

De rosée  
 Arrosée,  
 La rose a moins de fraicheur ;  
 Un hermine  
 Est moins fine ;  
 Le lait a moins de blancheur.

Pour entendre  
 Sa voix tendre  
 On déserte le hameau,  
 Et Tityre  
 Qu'elle attire  
 Fait taire son chalumeau.

Elle est blonde,  
 Sans seconde,  
 Elle a la taille à la main ;  
 Sa prunelle  
 Etincelle  
 Comme l'étoile du matin.

D'ambroisie  
 Bien choisie  
 Hébé la repaît à part ;  
 Et sa touche,  
 Si j'y touche,  
 Me parfume de nectar !

*(Translated.)*

Come, sweet Aurore,  
 Come, I implore,

My heart is glad when thy smile I see ;  
 The maid I love,  
 All maids above,  
 Hath a vermeil cheek, and a brow like thee.

The dewy rose  
 That beams and glows  
 Hath not so fresh and clean a light,  
 Nor so softly fine  
 Can th' ermine shine,  
 And the purest milk is not so white.

That he may hear  
 Her voice so clear  
 The hind his hamlet quits betimes,  
 And Lubin, bound  
 By the magic sound,  
 Ceases awhile to chant his rhyme.

O fair is she,  
 And no peer hath she,  
 With a slender form, and sparkling eyes  
 That softly gleam,  
 That sweetly gleam,  
 Like the star that lights the morning skies.

Ambrosial wine,  
 A drink divine,  
 Does Hebe give her all unseen ;  
 And, ah ! what bliss,  
 When her lips I kiss,  
 I taste the nectar there, I ween !

The old Terentian adage—" *Amantium ira  
 redintegratio amoris est*"—was well understood by Gabrielle, and she kept alive the king's

love by occasional petulances and light lively quarrels. His jealousy was excessive, though it does not seem to have been warranted by any misconduct on the part of his mistress. On one occasion, after a transient strife, she sent her portrait to the king, who was then at St. Denis, and in acknowledgment, he wrote a charming little note :—

“ Je vous escris, mes chers amours, des pieds de votre peinture, que j’adore seulement pour ce qu’elle est faite pour vous, non qu’elle vous ressemble. J’en puis être juge compétent vous ayant peint en toute perfection dans mon âme, dans mon cœur, dans mes yeux.”

It is almost impossible to render into English the gracefulness of the above. We may, however, attempt an imitation :—

“ I write to you, my dear love, from the feet of your portrait, which I adore only because it represents you. Of this, indeed, I may well be a competent judge, having you pictured in all perfection, in my soul, in my heart, in my eyes.”

Here is another instance of the skill with which the king of the Snow-White Plume could use the language of love :—

“ Mes belles amours,—Deux heures après l’arrivée de ce porteur, vous verrez un cavalier que vous aime fort, que l’on appelle roi de France et de Navarre, titre certainement bien honne-

reux, mais bien pénible ; celui de votre sujet est bien plus délicieux. Tous trois sont bons à quelques sauces qu'on veuille les mettre, et pas résolu de le céder à personne ; mais c'est trop causer pour vous voir sitôt. Bon jour, mon tout, je baise vos beaux yeux un million de fois. Ce 22 Septembre. De nos délicats déserts de Fontainebleau."

" My beautiful love,—Two hours after the arrival of this messenger, you will see a cavalier who loves you warmly, whom they call King of France and Navarre, a title certainly very honourable, but very painful ; that of your subject is far more delightful. All three are good for some purposes, for which we wish to use them, and I am resolved to yield them to no one ; but this is too much prattle, as I shall see you so soon. Good day, 'my all,' I kiss your beautiful eyes a million of times."

Previous to his abjuration of the Reformed Faith—an abjuration which Gabrielle, though a political ally of the Huguenots, had warmly encouraged—he writes to her, from St. Denis :

" I arrived here early last night, and was besieged by saints (*Dieu gards*) until bed-time. It is believed that the truce will be signed to-day ; but in all things relating to the League, I declare myself of the order of St. Thomas (*i.e.*, mistrustful). Besides those persons whom I told you yesterday I had chosen to escort you

hither, I have despatched fifty arquebusiers, with as many cuirasses. The hope which I entertain of seeing you to-morrow restrains my pen from inditing a long epistle. On Sunday, I am to take the perilous leap. At this moment while I am writing, I have a hundred unfortunate distractions, which will make me hate St. Denis even as you dislike Mantes. Adieu, my heart; come early to-morrow morning, as it seems a year since I saw you. I kiss a million of times your beautiful hands. This 23rd day of July, (1593)."

Henry's abjuration raised *La belle Gabrielle* in public opinion, as her influence had undoubtedly contributed to the politic act; and she was compared to St. Clotilde, who converted to Christianity her husband Clovis, the famous King of the Franks.

In the following year Paris, which had so long been the head-quarters of the League, submitted to the king, and Henry made a triumphant entry into his capital on the 15th of September. The pageant was most sumptuous, and the popular enthusiasm uncontrollable. The king himself, as he bestrode his white charger gallantly, attired in a habit of grey velvet, which blazed with gold and precious stones, looked worthy of a nation's homage. He was surrounded by the chief nobles of the realm, and the great officers of state; and preceded by

the Marquise de Monceaux—the new title of his mistress—reclining in a superb litter of cloth of gold drawn by six mules gorgeously caparisoned. She shared in the stormy applause that surged and rolled through the garlanded streets.

In everything but name a queen, Gabrielle now gave way to her natural taste for splendour, and notwithstanding the miseries of a distracted realm, lavished the royal finances upon the most sumptuous festivals.

Her influence over the king continued to increase daily, and was cemented still more firmly by the births of two sons—one of whom was named Cæsar, afterwards the bold and brilliant Duc de Vendôme,\* and the other Alexander†; both of these heroic names being designed as a compliment to their chivalrous sire. The beautiful Gabrielle maintained a state which surpassed that of any queen of France; she had renounced the name and arms of Liancourt early in 1594, and assumed those of Monceaux; and she surrounded herself with a luxury and a splendour that aroused the indignant murmurs of the suffering Parisians, and dispelled her transient popularity.

At the christening of the child of Madame

\* Born at the Castle of Coucy in June, 1594.

† Born in 1596.

de Sourdis it was observed that she stood near the font with the king, who, during the entire ceremony, laughed and jested with her, and openly caressed her. She was attired in a robe of black satin, so loaded with precious stones, that she could barely sustain its weight. The haughty ladies of the family of Guise, Madame de Montpensier and de Nemours, acted as her waiting-women. When she took the babe in her arms, to present him at the font, she exclaimed :—

“*Mon Dieu !* he is so heavy, that I fear I shall let him fall.”

“*Ventre Saint gris,*” replied the soldier-king, “do not fear that ; he will take care, for he is well bandaged and swathed.”

Henry never seemed weary of lavishing gifts upon her. It seemed as if no amount of prodigality could satisfy his passionate love. And if a man may be forgiven for allowing himself to be misled by beauty, there was some excuse for the enamoured king. Her rounded and well-proportioned figure, her dark, deep eyes, glowing with a subdued fire, her broad white brow crowned by a mass of glorious hair, her graceful neck and swelling bust, and that peculiar charm of expression which the poet describes as “the mind, the music breathing in her face,” might have tempted an Antony to lose a world for one so fair. Monsieur Cape-

figue preserves a couple of quatrains affixed to her portraits. The first runs as follows :—

“ Fleur des beautés du monde, astre clair de la France,  
 Qui vous voit, vous admire et soupire en son cœur ;  
 Mais tout en même temps, votre regard vainqueur  
 Donnant vie au désir, fait mourir l'espérance.”

(*Translated.*)

Flower of beauties ! lustrous star of France,  
 To see thee is to wonder and to sigh ;  
 For, ah, sweet victor, thy resistless glance  
 Kindles desire, yet says all hope must die !

Another quatrain implies a compliment to the king :—

“ Voici bien quelques traits d'un ange incomparable,  
 Mais le vrai ne se peut ici bas l'imiter,  
 Car le ciel de son mieux l'a faite toute admirable,  
 Qu'elle étonne le monde et ne peut l'envier.”

(*Translated.*)

Some few faint traits behold of peerless youth,  
 Nor unto more would mortal hand aspire ;  
 For Heaven thus perfect made the lovely Truth,  
 That while men worshipp'd, none might dare desire !

But while the poets thus flattered the beautiful Gabrielle, the people of France were loud in their complaints of her extravagance, and vented their indignation in bitter satires upon the mistress of the king.



The mistress of the king ! Yes ; but already men spoke of a bold project to elevate her to the rank of Queen of France. Henri Quatre was desirous to become the founder of a dynasty, and as he could hope for no children from the wife whom he outraged, and who in her turn scandalized him, he had long ago turned his eyes towards the offspring of Gabrielle d'Estrées.\* Her two sons were fine, handsome, promising youths, and in them the house of Bourbon might have worthy successors. But the political difficulty was a formidable one. It was true that these natural children might be legitimized by the subsequent marriage of their mother, but would the haughty nobility of France forget that they had borne the sinister bar ? It seemed, at first, as if such a prospect was possible. Already the Huguenot Council of Rochelle had voted a gift of two thousand crowns to the youthful Cæsar. It was evident that the posterity of Gabrielle d'Estrées would be compelled to seek the support of the Huguenot party, and she herself had formed a close alliance with its leaders. They, in their turn, dreading the succession to the throne of a Catholic king, were prepared to lend their powerful assistance to the ambition of Gabrielle,

\* He appears to have formed this project as early as 1593, when he first opened negotiations with his Queen Marguerite to obtain her consent to a divorce.

whose elevation to the rank of Queen of France would effectually defeat the hopes of the Catholic party. Thus Gabrielle d'Estrées held somewhat similar relations to the Huguenots of France, as Anne Boleyn, at a later period, to the Protestants of England. The event was very different, for the conditions were not the same, but in both cases the struggles of religious parties were strangely blended with the fortunes of two women whose principal merit was their beauty; and religion was profaned by its abuse as an instrument of a king's lust, and an abandoned woman's ambition.

Monsieur Capefigue presents a striking picture of the contrast which at this time existed between the terrible miseries of the people, and the unbridled luxury of the court. The streets and open places were crowded with diseased beggars, while the mansion of Gabrielle and the palace of the Louvre glittered with sumptuous revelry. Always most elegant in her attire, Gabrielle wore, one evening, a regal robe of green damask. The king admired her appearance, but remarked that she had not enough jewels in her hair; she had but twelve diamonds, he said, when she ought to have had at least fifteen. At these fêtes, the king played very deeply, his adventurous and reckless character showing itself at the gaming-table, as in the lists of war or love. One night he won

from Monsieur de Lesdiguière five thousand crowns at three throws of the dice ; from De Saucy a string of pearls valued at eight thousand crowns. While the hospitals were unable to accommodate the applicants who clamoured for admission, the royal tables were loaded with luxuries ; and the Marchioness of Monceaux was accused, with some degree of justice, of being the cause of the profligacy which so largely increased the public misery.

Meanwhile, the agents of Henry were labouring at the court of Rome to obtain the dissolution of his marriage with Marguerite de Valois ; an enterprise which was attended with many political difficulties, from its connection with the dynastic question of who was to succeed the king. If he had no legitimate heirs whom the Parliament and the States General would accept, upon whom would the crown devolve ? The only representatives of the house of Bourbon were the Condés, the great Huguenot chiefs, who were the abhorrence and the hatred of the majority of the French people. The head of the line was Louis of Bourbon, one of the leaders of the Calvinist party, whom the Huguenots in their moments of temporary triumph had always proclaimed king. His son and successor was Henry, who when barely fifteen years of age, had fought side by side with Coligny for the Protestant faith. After the terrible day of

Saint Bartholomew he fled into Germany, where he married one of the illustrious Huguenot family of La Trémouille, and by her had a son who was held in such affection by the king, that scandal did not hesitate to declare he was really Henry's child.

Under no possible circumstances would a Condé have been accepted as king by the majority of the French nation. His name was a Huguenot symbol which would have aroused the fiercest passions of the Catholics. It was therefore evident that only the marriage of Henri Quatre, either to Gabrielle d'Estrées, which would legitimize her sons, or to some princess by whom he might reasonably expect to have legitimate offspring, could rescue France from the perils that threatened its future fortunes. The former alliance would evidently be distasteful to his subjects, and was unworthy of a King of France. Every consideration of policy urged his adoption of the latter course, and his ablest advisers endeavoured to force it upon him. Those of the Catholic nobles who had sworn allegiance to him, recognising his lawful rights in spite of his religion, solicited him to select some Catholic princess, and restore tranquillity to his distracted kingdom. Margaret, the light and laughing "reine Margot," was by no means hostile to the proposed divorce, and was willing enough to see herself



and husband released from the chains that bound two such discordant hearts together, but she required that her successor should be a woman of royal blood and stainless virtue. She did not hesitate to declare that she would never consent to the dissolution of her marriage in favour of Gabrielle d'Estrées. "This Gabrielle," she said, "was but an old mistress of the Duke de Bellegarde, who had obtained her heart, even during her *liaison* with the king, and the wife of that Liancourt who had dishonoured himself by consenting to a pretended marriage as a cover for the king's amours ;" and it was not for such a woman that Margaret would consent to annul her union with Henri Quatre.

In the face of this opposition, the ambitious hopes of Gabrielle daily grew stronger, for Henry's love seemed so incapable of decay. He was always by her side. They often rode out in company on horseback, Gabrielle dressed in male attire—in green, her favourite colour—Henri Quatre in grey, and their horses so close together that the riders could move forward hand in hand.

In the disquietude of her position she had recourse to the favourite superstition of the age, and like most loving hearts and many ambitious minds, endeavoured to pierce the secrets of the future. One day, when walking in the garden of the Tuileries, she encountered a famous magi-

cian, and immediately besought him to reveal the coming fate. For a time he refused, urging that with fortunes so fair as hers she had no need to wish for more; but as she insisted upon knowing how her life would end, he told her to look in her pocket-mirror, and satisfy herself respecting the object of her curiosity. She looked, and beheld the figure of a demon clutching her by the throat.

She also applied to the empirical Cayet, who devoted his life, after various religious alternations, to casting horoscopes, and searching for the philosopher's stone. His response alarmed her, for he predicted that her last pregnancy would bring her no good fortune.

A sudden cloud now overspread the horizon that had seemed so bright to her ambition. The long war between France and Spain, or rather between Henri Quatre and Spain, which had powerfully supported the rebellion of the League, was concluded by the peace of Vervins in 1598. The Cardinal de Medicis, who had had an important share in its negociation, became a favourite visitor at Henry's court, and received the king's confidence in relation to the proposed annulment of his marriage with Margaret of Valois. The Cardinal suggested that if the marriage were dissolved, there would still be no legitimate heirs to the throne, and without permitting an allusion to Gabrielle d'Es-

trées, hinted at an alliance between the king and Marie de Medicis, the niece of Pope Clement VIII. Such an alliance would at once clear away all the difficulties attending the dissolution of his former marriage, and secure for him the confidence of the Catholics of France—a confidence only half secured by his politic abjuration. His arguments overcame Henry's devotion to Gabrielle, for ambition—and the desire of founding a dynasty—were as powerful in the king's heart as love, and negotiations with the court of Rome were secretly opened. Gabrielle could obtain no clue to their purport, and yet she had a powerful presentiment of approaching evil, which not all Henry's caresses and love-gifts could overcome.

The period of her accouchement drawing near, and wishing to prepare for the offices and ceremonies of the Holy Week, Gabrielle quitted Fontainebleau, and took up her residence in the house of Zamet, the royal banker and financier, in the Marais, at Paris. Both the king and herself wept bitterly at parting, as if with a foreboding that they should see each other no more. And, indeed, does not a dim foreshadowing of the Future dawn upon us at such painful moments, as if Love could compel Fate to yield up some of its mysterious secrets? The eager heart impels the mind to examine probabilities and discuss them with unusual keenness, and

Affection—always so bold for itself, so timid for those it cherishes— pierces the cloud with straining eyes, and sees beyond the misfortune and the doom.

Zamet was implicated in the negotiations between the King and the Pope, and appears— perhaps by Henry's orders—to have made known their intention to the unhappy Gabrielle. The revelation shattered into dust the glorious fabric of hopes created by her ambition. Already haunted by uncertain fears, and shaken by lingering anxieties, she had not strength sufficient to bear the blow. She felt how terrible a change in her position the king's marriage would effect. At present she reigned at Court supreme, for there was no queen to lead the festivities, and claim the homage of the courtiers; and her connection with Henry seemed almost sanctified by the probability that it would terminate in marriage. But when once the king was wedded to a young and lovely woman, not only would her influence over him diminish, but her power at Court would decay. Power would fail her at the same time as Love, and she saw before her a dreary prospect of long years of suffering, disappointment, and shame. So bitter a revulsion of feeling, acting upon her weak frame, in the time of woman's greatest peril, was more fatal than that of poison, to which Rumour would fain

have ascribed her end ; and Gabrielle d'Estrées died of a broken heart.

It was on Monday, the 5th of April, that she had taken leave of the king. On the following Thursday, after having partaken heartily of a sumptuous banquet, she set out for the church of St. Antoine, celebrated for the excellence of its musical services, in order to hear *Les Ténèbres*. She was accompanied by Mademoiselle de Guise and the Duchess de Retz, to whom she showed some missives from Rome, which promised the speedy conclusion of the king's suit for divorce, and two letters which she had received from Henry that very day, so impassioned, and apparently so full of impatience to see her crowned as queen, that she had every reason to feel content.

But on her return to the Hôtel Zamet, the revelations made by the financier had so terrible an effect upon her, that while walking in the gardens, she was suddenly seized with violent convulsions. As soon as she had somewhat recovered, she was removed, at her own desire, to the residence of her kinswoman, Madame de Sourdis, at St. Germain-l'Auxerrois.

Here the convulsions returned, but the physicians and surgeons who attended her, were unable to apply any remedies on account of her pregnancy. She continued, therefore, to be shaken by the violent fits, alternated with at-

tacks of syncope, until, about seven o'clock on the morning of the 10th of April, death came to her relief. So great had been her pangs that her countenance was terribly distorted, and her mouth twisted into a slanting direction (*vers la nuque de son col*). Her body was opened, and the dead infant removed.

In those "good old days," sudden deaths were invariably attributed to the effects of poison, and rumour was speedily busy in proclaiming that such had been the end of Gabrielle d'Estrées. A more audacious calumny declared that she had died through magic, and the compact she had made with the devil to be permitted to marry the king. But if so, the devil was false to his bargain, and the compact was not fulfilled. Even the sagacious Sully could record the popular superstitions. "The Duchess," he says, "having conceived the design of arriving at the crown, sought everywhere for the persons whom she pretended were able to expedite her vanity and her ambition, but from whom she received answers fatal to her soaring pretensions. Some told her that she would only be married once [to M. de Liancourt]; others that she would die while still young; others, that through an infant she would lose the fruit of her hopes; others, that a certain individual who was familiar with her would play her an ill turn; and all in general told her that they could see no

signs in her person which marked her out to bear a sceptre and a crown, nor even any of her children. This afflicted her so keenly that one of her women, named Gratienne, told Sully, she did nothing but weep and sigh every night, without any one being able to divine the cause. She added that after the last parting between Henry and the Duchess, one of Gabrielle's friends having enquired the cause of the sorrowful discourse she had held with him, Gabrielle replied, she had been speaking of a magician who had cast her horoscope, and had predicted that her last pregnancy would prevent her from attaining the object of her ambition.

Henry's grief at the death of his mistress was most violent, and he showed by his loud cries and vehement exclamations, that there are times when heroes have their weaknesses like other men. He ordered all his Court to go into mourning, which he wore himself for three whole months; and to the day of his death he retained a sorrowful remembrance of the woman he had so ardently loved.

Her remains, and those of her dead infant, were at first interred in the church of St. Germain-l'Auxerrois; but were afterwards removed, with the pomp of a royal funeral, to the abbey of Maubuisson.

The death of Gabrielle was a fortunate event for France and Henri Quatre. If his love for

her had prevailed over reasons of state, and her potent influence had constrained him to break off his negotiations with Pope Clement, in order to leave him free to marry her, his throne would have been grievously shaken. As it was, her opportune death relieved him from a powerful embarrassment, and his alliance with Marie de Medicis consolidated his kingdom, and assured the establishment of his dynasty. Happily for the world, the loves and adulteries of kings will hardly again be suffered to affect, either for good or evil, the destinies of nations.

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*Authorities* :—*Mémoires de La Belle Gabrielle*, par lui-même; *Vie de Gabrielle*; *Gabrielle D'Estrées*, par Capefigue; *Dreux de Radier*; *History of the Reign of Henry IV*, by M. W. Freer; *Mémoires du Duc de Sully*; *Histoire des Amours de Henri Quatre*, par Louise Marguerite de Lorraine Guise; *Vie d'Aubigné*, &c.

END OF VOL. I.





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